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REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOR OF KIKUYU WOMEN IN TRANSRURAL KENYA: BEING CHOSEN

by

NJERI WAIYAKI ©

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY STUDIES

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1993

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the three most important people in my life. To my loving three year old daughter, Wairimu Waiyaki (Nimu) who constantly lifted my spirits even when the road ahead seemed insurmountable. She was in her own ways, the other Ph.D candidate.

To my father, Waiyaki Munyua (1903 - 1989) for his unwavering support and encouragement throughout my education. I am indebted to my late father for his earnest dedication to the education of his daughters. I am proud to have granted his wishes even after his death. "What ever happens to me, even if I die, I wish for you to complete your studies".

To my mother, Wairimu Waiyaki for her love, encouragement and support throughout my life. I wish to thank my mother for believing in the education of women as one of the means for empowering the female gender.

ABSTRACT

Reproductive behavior is a general term which covers a wide range of behaviors which relate to, or potentially relate to childbearing. This term may include knowledge, attitudes, values and norms associated with the formation of relationships between men and women, sexual reproduction and childbearing as well as actual sexual behavior and the demographic patterns by which the term is characterized. The limited body of knowledge relating to adolescent pregnancies and early childbearing in Kenya as well as the absence of qualitative data has provided the rationale for the study.

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that influence the reproductive behavior of young women residing in Njoro division, a transrural area in Kenya. Descriptive ethnography was used as the research approach for this study. This method allowed psychological space for respondents to describe their reality as they saw it and as knowers of their life experiences.

Nine young women became the primary key informants for this study. They included those who were in school, out of school, employed or not employed and those who were mothers or not. In-depth, open-ended interviews were conducted to identify themes related to preparation for reproduction, development and evolution of relationships and reproductive behavior in context. To enrich the descriptions of young women's views about their reproductive behavior, other interviews were conducted with secondary key informants.

Young women's reproductive behavior was characterized by five key elements which included: Isolation from their sources of guidance, their absence of voice in mate selection and reproductive decisions, passive roles in mate selection, threats instead of dialogue, and lack of control of sexual behavior. These elements are discussed in terms of their meaning for education and policy development in Kenya.

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CHAPTER I

Statement of the Problem

Reproductive behavior is a general term which covers a wide range of behavior related to, or potentially relating to childbearing. This term may include knowledge, attitudes, values and norms associated with the formation of relationships between men and women, sexual reproduction and childbearing as well as actual sexual behavior as represented by demographic patterns. The social and cultural factors which delimit actions in this domain provide the contextual setting for this study. The reproductive behavior of young Kikuyu women living in Njoro District, a transrural area, in Kenya is described. The objective is to provide a rich description of this aspect of life for this group of women.

Women are the key respondents in this study because they bear the major personal costs of reproductive behavior, particularly when it occurs outside of marriage. Demographic indicators to be discussed in a subsequent review indicate that age specific fertility rates for young women 15-19 in Kenya were 153 per 1000 in 1989 (Kenya Demographic and Health Survey, 1989). While these rates declined from 175 per 1000 in 1977, births to these women as a proportion of all births is 16 per cent. The sample is limited to transrural Kikuyu women because their reproductive behavior has not been well studied and it was necessary to limit the language of respondents to manage data collection.

The following is a discussion of the significance and the aim of the proposed study, the problem statement, the primary research question that was developed to guide the study, and the key definitions that will be used. The chapter will conclude with the delimitations of the study.

Significance and Aim

The Socio-cultural Context

Reproductive behavior cannot be understood outside of the socio-cultural context within which it takes place. Each society has norms that govern the conduct of its members (Leslie & Korman, 1985). These idealized patterns of behavior and attitudes follow certain patterns (de Graft-Johnson, 1981). In the family, for example, societal norms may specify which individuals are eligible to marry, when they should marry, what the proper attitudes towards children should be and what the patterns of sexual relationships and procreation should be (Leslie & Korman, 1985).

For any given society, childbearing is an important part of reproductive behavior. The value attached to childbearing is determined by the perceptions of the functions they serve and the needs they fulfill. In sub Sahara Africa great value is attached to children; and almost all children grow up expecting to become parents. This nearly universal and generally unquestioned anticipation of parenthood is reflected in the society's pronatalism. Children in this society have a special place as they help to determine the social status and respect bestowed upon their families within the larger community. Children have also traditionally provided old age security as the wealth flows from children to their parents (Caldwell & Caldwell, 1987). The more children a woman has, the more wealth she is likely to acquire and therefore a high fertility is seen to be an advantage to her in the long term (Page, 1988).

Values relating to children change with social cultural changes. Thus, while traditional values have sustained high fertility in sub Sahara Africa, other challenges to the social structure have emerged that have been instrumental in the transformation of the family's way of life. One such challenge has been posed by western education.

One can further argue, that as social conditions change (including technological, economic, structural and ideological values), the values, beliefs and lifestyles of a given generation also change. These changes impact on the family interactions and affect how new generations are socialized (Thornton, Chang & Sun, 1984). As a result, close ties which characterize individual relationships in traditional society become weakened and conformity to traditional values and norms, along with the sanctions associated with their violations, become less likely (Massanat, 1987; Uzoka, 1980).

Early pregnancy and childbearing are not a new phenomena in sub Sahara Africa. The typical African woman married before age twenty and had a large family with an average of six children. These reproductive patterns were accommodated within the culture's existing socio-economic and normative frameworks. However, what is new are the increasing number of out-of-wedlock births to young women aged 15-24. These births are taking place against a background of increased health standards and rising educational levels and aspirations of women (Mati, 1986; Mburugu, 1986).

Issues relating to the reproductive health of young women have become prominent in sub Sahara Africa in the past two decades. Reports based on review data from censuses, surveys and empirical research findings suggest that fertility rates among women in the 15-24 age group are high and on the increase (Gyepi-Gabrah, 1985a; K'Oduol, 1986; Mumia, 1986; Muraya & Mati, 1985; Obwaka, 1986; Sanghvi, Mati, Aggarwal, Lucas and Corkhill, 1983). Support for this claim is also evidenced by an increase in pregnancy-related complications. These include a high and rising number of abortions, a significant number of pregnancy-related school dropout rates among young females and indications that between 15-30 percent of men and women 15-24 years old have contracted sexually transmitted diseases (Aggarwal & Mati, 1980, 1982; Ferguson, Gitonga & Kabira, 1988; International Family Planning Perspectives [IPPF], 1986; Khasiani, 1985; Makokha, 1980; Muraya & Mati, 1985; Njoroge, 1984; WHO, 1989).

Of all the components of reproductive behavior in sub Sahara Africa, fertility patterns have been best described. These patterns are made up of a composite of demographic statistics related to pregnancy and abortion rates as well as birth rates for various groups. The fertility pattern is also represented by the time and timing of these events. For example, by documenting maternal age of first and subsequent births, and infant mortality rates one gains a more complete picture of actual fertility. The volume of total births has a significant demographic consequence for the continent of Africa. In addition, early childbearing compounds the population issue in that shorter time spans occur between generations and contributes to greater cumulative fertility.

In sub Sahara Africa, the existing pattern of early pregnancy and out-of-wedlock childbirth has been attributed to many factors. One of the key factors suggested is the breakdown of the traditional system of social support at the community level in which members bestowed with the responsibility of counseling and guiding youth on matters of sexuality no longer do so (Gyepi-Gabrah, 1985a; Muriuki, 1983). Other factors believed to contribute to this trend include changing socio-cultural and economic circumstances such as adoption of romantic love as a basis for mate selection and high involvement of adolescents in sexual activity before marriage (Gyepi-Gabrah, 1985a; IPPF, 1977, 1978; Khasiani, 1985; Migot-Adholla, 1986; Nichols, Ladipo, Paxman & Otolorin, 1986; Njau, 1986; Njoroge, 1984).

Although educational opportunities have improved for young African women since the 1970s, formal education authorities did not readily accept the inclusion of family life and sex education into the school curriculum (Gyepi-Gabrah, 1985a; Muriuki, 1983). Reluctance to include instruction in this area stems from fears that provision of such information may encourage more adolescents to engage in sexual activity than would have participated otherwise (Muriuki, 1983; UN Chronicle Perspective, 1985). While the incidence of early pregnancy and childbearing is evident, there have also been general restrictions on the availability of contraceptives to young unmarried women. In Kenya, the target group for the distribution of contraceptives has been defined as married couples in the reproductive age 15-49 years (Kigondu, 1986). It is clear that this definition excludes young unmarried women. Young unmarried women are denied family planning services because it is believed that such services may encourage and promote promiscuity and immorality (Covington, Otolorin, Janowitz, Gates, Lamptey & Ladipo, 1986).

Limited research has been conducted which deals in general with fertility and even less has focused on a more comprehensive view of other reproductive behaviors of young women in sub Sahara Africa. In Kenya, few research studies have focused on young female students' pregnancies and pregnancy-related school dropout rates (Ferguson, Gitonga & Kabira, 1988; Khasiani, 1985; Njogu, 1981). The results of the available studies indicate that there is an increase in the rate of early pregnancy and early childbearing among young unwed Kenyan women. The birth rates are, according to the Kenyan demographic statistics, on the increase at a time when educational opportunities are being expanded for young women.

The available data on young women's fertility and fertility-related behaviors is mainly based on quantitative indices of the prevalence or frequency of adolescent pregnancies, childbearing, abortions and sexually transmitted diseases. While one appreciates the contributions made by these quantitative research studies, they provide only a partial picture of reproductive behavior. Such studies exclude the emic perspective, that is, the insider's view of their own world. The emic perspective is crucial in understanding the meaning that individuals attach to their own life experiences.

Meaning is the interpretation that the insiders place on rules, issues and behaviors of their culture. By providing psychological space to allow the insider to express herself, the emic perspective illuminates meaning that is useful in making empirical knowledge explicit. This perspective therefore allows the researcher to identify concepts and to link them from a new vantage point. It provides a way of knowing and learning about personal experience. The emic perspective personalizes truths about the way people perceive and find meaning in their lived experiences so as not to lose sight of the subjective nature of human behavior. The emic perspective provides an opportunity to see people as they develop their own definitions of their world (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975) In order to understand the perspectives of young women and complement the existing knowledge of their reproductive behaviors gathered through quantitative studies, there is a need to explore and describe the meaning that these insiders attach to their life experiences.

As already indicated however, a comprehensive understanding of the reproductive behavior of young people must go beyond a study of their fertility.

One must identify the factors that influence young people's reproductive behavior within the existing socioeconomic and cultural framework within which they live. An understanding of the meaning which young women attach to their interactions and relationships is needed in order to appropriately address their needs in future interventions. Such an understanding is necessary to identify key factors which may govern the reproductive behavior of young women.

To address the issues related to young women's reproductive behavior in such a rich way, an ethnographic study was carried out to describe the reproductive behavior of young women 15-24 years of age living in a transrural community. This group served as the primary key informants in order to gain the perspective of their fertility experiences. By virtue of their status, age and sex, women play a key role in the process of childbearing. Based on their experiences as well, young women 15-24 years of age were believed to be endowed with special knowledge to comprehensively describe reproductive behavior.

The Transrural Focus

Africa is a predominantly rural continent. In Kenya, for example, more than 80 percent of the population lives in the rural areas. As in other countries, the African continent has different types of rural settings. The differences are based on the extent of interaction of each setting with the outside world. For example, people living in villages that are situated near a major road or a railhead are influenced differently than those living in a more isolated village. The increased communication with other people and institutions may be positive in terms of improved transportation, freer flow of new ideas and comparably easy access to services such as hospitals and schools. These influences may be considered negative impacts because some contacts may challenge traditionally held belief's and attitudes, and may bring in harmful practices such as drug use. Villages in the deep interior of Africa are much more limited in terms of communication, transport and contact with the outside world. These differences between isolated villages and transrural villages potentially affect all aspects of rural life (Abell & Gill, 1962).

Within the traditional rural settings, behavior is organized and regulated for individuals or groups to meet collective needs. This requires a reasonable measure of uniformity in behavior, thus creating order in society. Order is a function of social control; a process and a mechanism used by the group to shape its members' thoughts and behavior in certain predetermined ways (de Graft-Johnson, 1981). It is social control which enables members of a society to internalize their culture, values, rules and regulations so that their behavioral responses become reasonably consistent and orderly (de Graft-Johnson, 1981).

A transrural context was chosen for this study because it provides a context to assess the impact of increased external interaction on an important family function, reproductive behavior. Evidence indicates that as rural communities interact with the outside world, the families within them face transitions. For example, fewer family groups fit the extended family pattern. These transitions may challenge the rural family life style and are attributed to affect the emerging social cultural values of people in their reproductive behavior. For example, values related to the regulation of sex and reproduction and mate selection cease to be based on the expectations and perception of the extended family kin and instead rely heavily on the nuclear family. A transrural community is thus an area in transition from a rural to an urban way of life and is often associated with an imbalance in the social control mechanisms, such as those related to family based sex education and moral guidance, which previously provided restraints on sexual activity before marriage. Members in such settings become more independent in making individual decisions and choices on matters relating to their own lives. These decisions and choices include those related to reproductive behavior, particularly childbearing patterns. For example, differential patterns of childbearing have been reported for rural and urban areas for all women of childbearing age. Data from Kenya show that women in the urban areas of that country have a total of approximately five live births, compared to about seven for rural women (Kenya Demographic & Health Survey, 1989). Age specific data for Zimbabwe also indicate that one in seven urban teens (15-19) is pregnant or already a mother compared to one in four rural teenagers (Zimbabwe Demographic & Health Survey, 1989).

There is worldwide evidence that early childbearing is associated with truncated education resulting in lower achievement, higher medical risks for mother and baby, fewer life choices and lower social economic status (Gyepi-Gabrah, 1985a; Khasiani, 1985; Mati, 1985; Sanghvi, 1986). These elements change the life course of the young mother and are considered to be key contributing factors to a host of later problems. These conditions are therefore disadvantageous to young women and involve high social and economic costs for individuals and society (Furstenberg, Lincoln, & Menken, 1981; WHO, 1989; Ngoka, 1980; Sanghvi, Mati, Aggarwal, Lucas & Corkhill, 1983). Thus, because of the problems experienced the reproductive behavior of young women living in transrural African areas is an important subject to study. Increased understanding of women's perspective of such behavior can contribute to an understanding of the phenomena of increased premarital pregnancies.

Research Questions

The reproductive behavior of young women 15-24 years of age who were residing in transrural Kenya comprised the focus of this research. The research question was concerned with a wide range of life experiences making up the broad conceptualization of reproductive behavior and directed the search for relationships between and among these concepts.

The primary research question which guided this study was:

> What is the nature of reproductive behavior for young transrural Kikuyu women?

Definition of Terms

Young women were defined as young women between the ages of 15 and 24.

Transrural was defined as an area in transition from rural to urban. In contrast to a rural area, a transrural area is primarily a farming area which is closely adjacent to the newer urban influences such as major roads, educational institutions, tourist facilities, factories or major business enterprises. The proximity of these structures to such an area increases the potential of the interaction of persons living in this setting with those living and working in many other settings.

Reproductive Behavior was defined as all aspects of a woman's behavior which relate, or potentially relate, to childbearing. This includes preparation for reproductive roles, and family formation, formation of relationships between men and women, and methods of choosing life partners, as well as fertility patterns, knowledge and attitudes about sex, reproduction, child rearing, sexual behavior and health problems emerging from reproductive behavior.

Delimitations of the study

The study is limited to a description and analysis of the reproductive behavior as perceived by young Kikuyu women living in Njoro Division, a particular transrural setting in Kenya. Njoro Division is a smaller area within Nakuru District which is a subdivision of the Rift Valley Province.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

There are conflicting views about the role and extent to which the review of literature should be used to guide qualitative research. Glaser (1978) suggests that, for grounded theory, the researcher should enter the setting without consulting the literature in order to avoid undue influence of previous work on the focus of the current study. This approach allows the researcher to develop a preliminary conceptualization of the study before consulting the literature. Later, the researcher engages in sampling the literature in order to expand or confirm the "emergent framework".

Field and Morse (1985), on the other hand, suggest that the role of the literature review in qualitative research is to critique previous research on the basis of its assumptions, biases and unsubstantiated conclusions, and then to use the existing literature to guide the focus of the study. For the current study, the literature review was used a) to clarify the study rationale, b) to sharpen the formulation of the research questions, and 3) to provide insight for subsequent data analysis and interpretation.

This chapter will begin with a review of the cultural and historical context of the Kikuyu people, viewed first from the traditional social context, including how values and norms were transmitted, how mate selection was accomplished and the place of childbearing in the social order. This section will conclude with a discussion of the key transitional influences on traditional Kikuyu family patterns. Further, the chapter will include a review of the patterns of various aspects of reproductive behavior in Kenya as revealed by demographic data. A section of this chapter will also present what has been discovered through research about the various aspects of reproductive behavior for young Kenyan women, particularly those residing in rural or transrural settings. This review will conclude with a discussion of the various theories about changes on the family system and relationships resulting from urbanization and modernization.

Culture as a Socializing Agent

Culture represents the tools, the materials and the means people have developed to meet their material and social needs in life. In each culture there are norms that govern the behavior of people. Norms are idealized patterns of behavior and attitudes that dictate acceptable and unacceptable modes of conduct for particular groups. Norms are transmitted from one generation to another (de Graft-Johnson, 1981). The processes of transmitting knowledge may be formal or informal. Informal processes of education about reproduction would include the socialization and enforcement by extended family kin and participation in tribal ceremonies and puberty rites. These educational mechanisms transmitted a relatively coherent body of knowledge, beliefs and values thus sustaining them and ensuring their survival (Sifuna, 1980). Varying sets of norms regulate different behaviors. The social system which monitors the norms that regulate adult sex relationships and procreation is the family institution (de Graft-Johnson, 1981).

Within this broad definition of culture an attempt will now be made to describe the general culture of the Kikuyu people which includes a section on the traditional social organization of this group, the social life and sexual life of the Kikuyu youth; transmission of culture among the Kikuyu, the role of parents in Kikuyu society and the value attached to children. These discussions will help focus on reproductive behavior within this cultural context, and to highlight the interplay between traditional culture and human reproduction and the present changing social conditions.

The Traditional Cultural and Historical Context

Social Organization

The Kikuyu are a Bantu speaking group that traditionally resided in the Central area of Kenya. Kikuyu social organization was based on kinship and age-group systems. Three important systems, namely the family unit, the clan and the age-group system all served a vital function in the transmission of culture for this group. These three systems all emphasized the importance of group life in the community.

The family clan (*mbari*) or individual unit (*nyumba*) was the most basic of the kinship group. It consisted of members who were closely related by blood. These members included a man, his wife and children as well as the grandparents and great grandchildren. The family unit was the center of all economic and social life.

The second system was the clan (*muhiriga*) which included those members who were believed to have descended from one common ancestor in the distant past. The several family units joined by the clan assumed one family name (Kenyatta,1938). The members of a clan frequently interacted during events such as weddings, initiation religious and ritual ceremonies (Ahlberg, 1991).

The third was the age-group system. The beginning of membership in an age-group (*riika*) was marked by the rite of circumcision for both males and females. This rite de passage united and solidified the whole tribe in all its activities. In his description of the Kikuyu culture, Kenyatta (1938) placed this ritual procedure at the center of a whole teaching of tribal law, religion and morality. Kenyatta's position is shared by Worthman and Whiting (1987), who state that the physical operation marked the beginning of an educational process entailing a sequence of instructions, socialization and imparting of social values and subsequent adult behavior. It constituted a period when Kikuyu men and women approaching adulthood were prepared to assume their adult roles.

Cultural Sanctions of Behavior

Each society employs mechanisms of social control to shape people's thoughts and conduct in certain pre-determined ways. Through these mechanisms of social control, values, culture and rules are internalized so that behavioral responses of a group of people become reasonably consistent (de Graft-Johnson, 1981). Various agents' socialization efforts oversee people's conduct and ensure the enforcement and conformity of the rules. Some of these efforts include religious rules, taboos and curses. Families and peer groups provided their own pressure to keep their members within their accepted notions of right conduct. Both negative and positive sanctions were used to deter those who deviated from the accepted norms and to reward those who conformed to the expected norms (de Graft-Johnson, 1981).

The Kikuyu culture was based on a belief system in the ancestral spirits (Kenyatta, 1938). These spirits were endowed with the powers to punish those members who did not conform to the established rules of conduct. Taboos and prohibitions were used to ensure conformity to the established rules (Kenyatta, 1938). Some of the sanctions included those related to premarital sex and acceptable moral conduct for collective behavior in the community. For example, because of the strong value of social relationships, group members were responsible for each other's welfare and were collectively responsible for the good name of their age-group. Failure to conform to the acceptable mode of conduct resulted in punishment (Kenyatta, 1938). Punishment for deviation from acceptable social norms included payments of heavy fines most likely in the form of cows and beer, and being ostracized by group members (Center for the Study of Adolescence, 1992). Peers were the most effective in punishing a person for deviant sexual behavior. For example, young people who broke the rules of group sexual play (*ngwiko*) by meeting privately, were punished by being socially banned from attending and participating in such other ceremonies (e.g. group dances) and by being ostracized (Center for the Study of Adolescence, 1992).

Transmission of Cultural Norms

The Kikuyu system of education was informal. From birth and until the time the child was ready for tribal education, this informal learning was carried out by the parents. Young girls learned all the things concerning family life from their mothers. This teaching included topics such as the domestic duties of a wife in managing and harmonizing the affairs of a homestead. Young girls were also trained in housework, and child care which included carrying, feeding and caring for children, cutting and gathering firewood and fetching water (Kenyatta, 1938).

The mother was also responsible for teaching her sons the laws and customs of the Kikuyu, especially those governing the moral code of behavior as well as community relations. The teaching was carried out through the use of folklore. For example, messages relating to sexuality were communicated through the use of proverbs and other forms of oral narratives such as riddles (Kenyatta, 1938; Center for the Study of Adolescence, 1992). The boys learned how to herd cattle, sheep and goats. Both boys and girls learned to help their parents and to work under a system of reciprocity with other people (Kenyatta, 1938). Grandmothers and aunties also played a role. Grandmothers used oral narratives and riddles to convey sexual education and served as mediators in disciplinary actions.

Youth dances were encouraged as a medium in which circumcised young men and women freely expressed their sexual feelings by close body contact, petting and fondling (Kenyatta, 1938). These dances were held at the district level occasionally and were attended by parents. Parents observed and judged whether the youth had internalized appropriate social behaviors (Kenyatta, 1938). The youth who did not behave according to the approved conduct were considered ill prepared to become worthy members of their communities. Criticism and disapproval was directed at the parent whose children did not behave according to rules of conduct. What Kenyatta (1938) says about Kikuyu education summarizes the important role of personal relations:

> It is with personal relations, rather than with the natural phenomena that the Gikuyu education is concerned right from the very beginning. Growing boys and girls learn that they have one thing to learn which sums up all the others, and that is the manners and deportment proper to their station in the community. They see that their happiness in the homestead, their popularity with their playmates, their present comforts and their future prospects depend on knowing their place, giving respect and obedience where it is due (p. 102).

Norms Governing Sexuality

Premarital sexual intercourse was prohibited for both men and women. However, the newly initiated young men and women were allowed to engage in *ngwiko* or fondling. This public courtship system took place in a context of strict codes of conduct. A group of young women and men (lovers), met at a special hut (*thingira)* where they engaged in *ngwiko* in this one room. This practice of engaging in *ngwiko* in one common room strengthened peer pressure and minimized chances of full sexual intercourse. The tribal laws prohibited the young man from pulling out a traditional woman's skirt in order to avoid penetration.

Following the physical operation of circumcision, women participated in dances (*gitiiro*). These dances were important forums for imparting knowledge, community values and acceptable rules of conduct. The messages imparted in the initiation, ritual songs and dances mainly focused on the sexual and reproductive roles of men and women (Ahlberg, 1991). Among this was instruction on rules governing expected sexual behavior (Center for the Study of Adolescence, 1992).

Traditionally sanctioned social activities were allowed for young Kikuyu males and females. These included organized night and day dances both for recreation and enjoyment. Young men and women were allowed to socialize freely at these functions (Kenyatta, 1938).

Mate Selection

Traditionally, mate selection was conducted freely between young men and women. Mate selection was carried out in four stages. The first stage involved the proposal of the young man to marry the girl. At this stage, only the young man and his close associates were involved in starting the negotiations for his proposal to marry the young woman. From the second stage to the fourth stage of this process, the parents of the young man and woman were involved in the ceremonies that were carried out.

The first stage was characterized by a visit of the would-be-groom to the home of the bride-to-be. When a young man fell in love with a young woman, he revealed this to his close friends. If a young woman accepted the man's formal proposal for marriage, she would declare her acceptance to the young man. After her acceptance, her parents would then become involved in making arrangements for the Kikuyu wedding ceremonies. These ceremonies were conducted prior to the wedding day.

From this stage on, the parents of both the young woman and the man became involved in the marriage arrangements. A ceremony of acceptance followed this visit in which the parents of the young man brought "the beer of asking for the girls' hand" to the parents of the young woman.

The third stage was characterized by beginning to make installments of the dowry which was determined by the young man's family wealth. The dowry was in the form of sheep, goats or cattle and was made in installments. The customs of the clan determined when the installments were enough in order to carry out the sealing of the engagement. The ceremony carried out during the formal engagement is thus referred to as "the pouring of the blood of unity" or merging the two families. This was a significant ceremony because it was during this time that it was announced publicly that the young woman was engaged, and this also provided an opportunity for the relatives of the young man and woman to meet and get to know each other.

At the fourth stage a day was set to sign the marriage contract. It involved feasting by the two families. The young woman was offered two kidneys of the first sheep which was slaughtered for the feast. Eating of the kidneys, signified that the engagement was still in force, and that the families could proceed with finalizing the marriage contract. The ceremony of signing the marriage contract was finalized at this stage (Kenyatta, 1938).

Thus, courtship in the Kikuyu system was based on mutual love and gratification of sexual desires between two individuals. Marriage occupied a position of great importance as a contract that bound the couple and the kinfolk. Through this contract the marriage ceased to be a personal matter and instead included the extended family.

The wedding day was kept a secret to the young woman because according to the traditions, an unsuspecting bride was to be snatched by the women from the groom's family. The bride was snatched by the female relatives of the young man and carried shoulder high to the hut of the young man (Kenyatta, 1938).

Values Relating to Childbearing

Each culture actualizes its parental objectives in the context of particular social values, beliefs and symbolic processes (Kilbride & Kilbride, 1990). Within the Kikuyu marriage, children were desired to build up the family group, and to extend and prolong the clan (*mbari*) by this means. Children were considered to belong to their father and his clan. Without children the clan was lost (Kenyatta, 1938). Among the Kikuyu tribe, children were also highly valued for the security and the social status they brought to their parents and they also provided agricultural labor. Couples with children acquired a higher position in society than childless couples. Others from the clan regarded them as people with high regard. Thus, one of the most important duties within marriage was procreation. A childless marriage was regarded as a failure. Not only were children were believed to bring happiness to the couple as individuals but to the clan as a whole. Kenyatta (1938) argued the parents had children for the social group.

Summary

Social customs and beliefs are deeply rooted in the past and they govern most aspects of daily life in a society. Traditional Kenyan beliefs stressed the importance of the kinship and lineage and the obligations one had as a member of these groups. These beliefs also emphasized the importance of the obligations and attachments one has to the tribe, the village and ones ethnicity.

Evidence suggests that the Kikuyu traditional society was a close-knit extended system which was characterized by cultural and social homogeneity. Common and similar values were shared by all members of this group. Passage rites or initiations were used as an effective form of preparation for adulthood and marriage. Each member was expected to carry on the good name of ones family and age-group. Such identity with the group created a psychological preparation for the transition to adolescence and adulthood. In the traditional society, for instance, children were raised within the extended family atmosphere of emotional security and enjoyed close family relationships. This kind of setting created a strong sense of identity.

Transitional Influences on Kikuyu Family Patterns

Today the Kikuyu are a major ethnic group that comprises 20 percent of Kenya's total population of 25 million. The majority of this group resides in the Central province which is made up of five districts. These districts include Kiambu, Murang'a, Nyeri, Nyandarua and Kirinyaga. However, since Kenya's independence in 1963, the Kikuyu as well as other ethnic groups have migrated internally into other provinces of the country. Some of these provinces include the Rift Valley province. This is the largest province in Kenya comprising thirteen districts of which Nakuru district is one. Beginning in the early 1970s large numbers of Kenyans bought large scale farms from European settlers in the Rift Valley. These farms were sub-divided into various sizes, forming what is generally referred to as Societies. High concentrations of Kenyans live in the fertile arable lands east and west of the Great Rift Valley (Ahlberg, 1991).

Colonial influences on the Kikuyu family social support network can be traced back to the colonization of Africa in the early 1900's. Ahlberg (1991), posits that two major, but related colonial policies that were established in Kenya at the time of colonization are the basis of these influences. The first policy was concerned with the establishment of a colonial economy and the second one with the erosion of cultural values and customs which supported the African social systems. These policies were pervasive and had an impact on the family social support network in various ways. The following section of this chapter will focus on the contribution of these policies to the restructuring of the Kikuyu social organization in ways that are explanatory of the current changing patterns of the family network.

The introduction of a monetary economy, the introduction of western education and Christianity are viewed by many as key contributing factors in the alienation of family members from their social support systems and consequently in the dismantling of cultural values and customs which traditionally supported the Kikuyu social system (Ahlberg, 1991; Kenyatta 1938). The mechanisms which were employed to effect the alienation of family members will be briefly discussed below.

Urban Male Migration

A major consequence of the establishment of a colonial economy in Kenya was the mass migration of males from rural to urban areas. Males were prompted to migrate from the rural areas to towns in search of monetary employment. This internal migration "represents a basic transformation of the model structure of a society in which people move from smaller, mainly agricultural communities to larger, mainly non agricultural communities" (Mtetwa, 1982).

Migration was an alienating factor for the families in Kenya because it separated husbands and wives. Wives could not join their husbands either as their dependents or as workers because husbands were paid low wages, and there were inadequate amenities and poor living conditions in towns and cities (Ahlberg, 1991). Husbands could not support their families in the urban settings nor could they provide adequately for themselves. The husbands were often forced to rely on remittances from the rural areas for their daily needs. Thus instead of enhancing their families' status and welfare, they were dependent upon it. Jobs in the urban areas were restricted to men. Domestic jobs in the urban areas came to be dominated by women only in the mid-1940s (Ahlberg, 1991).

While men's economic status was not vastly improved, this internal migration also transformed people's ideas due to their interactions with persons outside the reserves, segregated areas where the Kikuyu people lived. Those who migrated from rural areas adapted to the values of the urbanites, thus new norms were set and new roles assigned. The different norms that were established determined how the new roles were played (de Graft-Johnson, 1981).

Migration led to cultural delocalization of people. This delocalization entailed the breakdown of the traditional cultural standards about proper sexual behavior, reproduction and family life (Kilbride & Kilbride, 1990).

Impact of Education

The missionaries envisioned a vital link between education and religion. The church financed school was seen as an effective channel through which to wean the so-called pagans from their traditional ways of life to Christianity. The colonialists thus targeted children and adolescents for this form of education. However, education was selectively directed to the males because investment in males was perceived to be beneficial in the long term for the colonial economy. These males were later to be recruited to serve the interests of the colonial economy. The selective form of education served to marginalize women from the mainstream of society. This exclusion of women from new forms of education confirmed women, the true peasants as well as the carriers of the cultural life (Ahlberg, 1991).

This educational approach had other negative effects on the family network. The approach meant that these groups of young people, if they adopted Christianity, would forego the tribal rites and instruction. Thus, this approach interfered with the valued forms of instruction such as those related to reproduction and sexuality. Although missionary interference proved to be the major concern for the Africans, those who adhered to the new and emerging forms of education and worship won support from the administration and missionaries in terms of higher wages and status in their communities (Mutua, 1975). For such adherents, formal education was often used as a reward. Conversely, education was used as punishment for adherents who drifted back to one or another form of the prohibited African customs such as female circumcision (Ahlberg, 1991). For example, the missionaries often denied education to children of those who drifted back to the traditions. This state of affairs created a push and pull situation as formal education and religion became the mechanisms upon which to gain power and prestige in the communities.

Impact of Religion

Religion was also an influential mechanism of change for the current Kikuyu family patterns. Ahlberg (1991) suggests that Christian teaching was instrumental in the inculcation of new ways of life and values. This variation of religion differed from the traditional forms in that it invalidated some of the functional roles of Kikuyu customs that were used by the indigenous people to support and regulate their social system. For example, the customs and practices that related to ritual ceremonies such as passage rites, sexual play, and polygamy and marriage transactions such as the payment of dowry were deemed un-Christian and hence became prohibited by church authorities.

Christian teaching also introduced a deep seated discomfort with discussing adolescent sexuality and strong moralistic taboos associated with premarital sexuality (Center for Population Options, 1992). Drifting back to customary practices was socially costly for people. Persons who practiced traditional customs were suspended from the church, refused baptism and confirmation, denied other privileges such as education and grazing ground, for cattle and those employed had their employment terminated. This provides one explanation of the breakdown of social customs that regulated and supported the traditional social system (Ahlberg, 1991; Kenyatta, 1938).

One of the effects of the colonial approach with regard to education and religion was the shift of key responsibility for socializing the young from the extended family and community to the detached church and school institutions. The church and the schools today share the role of socializing the child with the family.

Information gathered in this review illustrates a change in the Kikuyu traditional cultural patterns related to reproduction. This change has been been influenced by various interacting factors such as education,religion, migration, and urbanization. Further, this information indicates the effects of these changes on the family structure.

This review further shows the breakdown of the Kikuyu customs related to circumcision, sex, and reproduction. This breakdown has created gaps in the mode of information dissemination and a narrowing of the channels which could be used to pass on knowledge relating to family life. The breakdown of the social organization also contributed to invalidate the cultural checks for socially acceptable behavior. Observation of social rules of conduct, the control mechanisms and rituals which were effective in a traditional society could no longer be as effective (Ahlberg, 1991).

Impact of Colonial Domination on the Status of Women

Introduction of a monetary economy provided the background for many negative effects on the status of Kikuyu women. These negative effects are related to the mass migration of Kikuyu males, land shortage and the changing economic structure.

Ahlberg (1991) suggests that lack of capital assets in the rural areas was the major reason for the mass migration of Kikuyu males from rural reserves to the cities in Kenya. This migration of males had a negative impact on the family as the support offered to Kikuyu women for agricultural activities was withdrawn. In addition, agricultural improvement policies were geared towards the extension of commercial agriculture and cash crop production instead of increasing subsistence food production (Ahlberg, 1991). Further, land ownership had already been registered to the male head, therefore women's access as daughters, wives and later as mothers of sons was curtailed (Kilbride, 1990).

In addition, land title was used as security for acquiring government bank loans. Thus, land that was exclusively used for subsistence food production, acquired new value as property and as a result, women lost their former control over land use for food production and its distribution (Ahlberg, 1991; Kilbride, 1990). Another consequence of this migration was the absence of the males from the home for certain periods. This implied that the control mechanisms which were effective in enforcing observance of social rules of conduct (for example, those regarding sexuality) could no longer apply in these changed settings.

Formal education also inculcated new values that were non supportive of agricultural manual work. In this context, education played a major role in lowering food production and in increasing the marginalization of women. Kikuyu women were forced by their economic and social circumstances to take up the responsibility of production and childbearing without the support of their husbands (Ahlberg, 1991). This increased the workload without the needed assistance, for example, in the preparation of land and harvesting led to poor food production and lack of food surpluses for family consumption. At the same time, Kikuyu migrant males received low wages which were inadequate to sustain them in the cities. As a result they became dependent on rural remittances from their families (Ahlberg, 1991).

In the remaining sections of this chapter will be a review of the demographic trends in fertility of Kenyan women particularly those aged 15-24. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the gaps in understanding the reproductive behavior of young women as they have been identified in the review of literature.

Current Demographic Patterns of Key Factors of Reproductive Behavior

The traditional and transitional patterns which have been detailed provide a historical context for current demographic patterns of reproductive behavior.

Marriage Patterns

Current figures indicate that 75 percent of women in Kenya aged 40-44 married before the age of 20, compared with only 52 percent of women aged 20-24. The median age at marriage has increased from 17.3 among women 40-44 to 19.8 for those aged 10-24 (Kenya Demographic & Health Survey, 1989). This increase in the median age at first marriage is perhaps related to the increased education of women.

In Kenya, women with secondary school or higher education have the highest median age at marriage (21.6). The difference in the median age at marriage between this group and women who have no education is 4.7 years over all ages and is almost six years for those aged 20-24 (Kenya Demographic & Health Survey, 1989). These data however must be considered with caution because 32 percent of young Kenyan women age 15-19 become pregnant before marriage and 40 percent do not marry. Thus over 70 percent of women in this age group get pregnant outside of marriage while only 28 percent of them get pregnant after marriage. Whether these young women get married or not, early childbearing brings an abrupt end to their formal education because school policies deny pregnant girls the opportunity to continue with the current school year. For example in Kenya in 1988, an estimated 8,000 girls were forced to drop out of school due to pregnancy related reasons (Ferguson, 1988).

Differences exist in the median age at first marriage for women in rural and urban areas. Urban women marry later than their rural counterparts with an overall difference of 1.5 years in the median age at first marriage (Kenya Demographic & Health Surveys, 1989). Education may influence the differences found in age at first marriage for rural and urban women since generally, women in the urban areas have higher education levels than rural women. However, while the evidence indicates that there is a rising average marriage age, it can be concluded that it is still low in comparison to other countries in the world. For example, the average age at marriage for young women in the United States is 20 years. This low average age at marriage among females contributes substantially in sustaining the high fertility rates in Kenya (Gyepi-Gabrah, 1985a).

Fertility Patterns

Demographic data are useful indicators of current patterns of fertility, mortality and health status of nations. Fertility is the most important component of population change. Demographic data on fertility patterns are useful in indicating not only fertility levels and trends, and age at first birth but other demographic elements such as age structure and population growth rates.

Kenya has a strikingly high fertility in comparison to the other countries of the world. In the early 1980s, Kenya had a total fertility rate of 8.0 children per woman (World Bank, 1986). At this time, this was the highest in the world. Data also indicate that 55 percent of Kenyan women had given birth by the time they attained age 20 (KDHS, 1989).

Age-Specific Fertility Rates

More than 50 percent of Kenya's population is less than 24 years of age. A group this large is very influential on Kenya's population patterns and has contributed significantly to a changed fertility pattern. Age specific fertility rates for young women 15-19 years of age are high but are reported to have been declining steadily over the past 15 years. In 1977, age specific fertility rates for 15-19 year olds were 213 per 1000. These rates declined to 175 by 1985 and 153 in 1989. This decline of fertility rates for this group of women may be attributed to greater educational opportunities and changes in age at marriage. While this decline is evident, the annual number of births to young Kenyan women,(15-19) was reported to be 197,000, and births to teenagers as a proportion of all births is 16% (KDHS, 1989). Additionally, Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) in Kenya found that 77 percent of first pregnancies for unmarried Kenyan women 15-19 years old were reported as unintended (Population Reference Bureau, 1992). Given these statistics, young women's fertility in Kenya is of critical interest.

Rural/Urban Differences in Fertility

Available data on fertility shows considerable difference in fertility rates between rural and urban areas. Women in the urban areas of Kenya have a total fertility of approximately five live births, compared to about seven for rural women. Much of the observed rural-urban differences are probably attributable to the differential practice of birth control, acceptance of which spreads outward from urban to rural areas. The differences may also be explained by the knowledge differential about birth control in rural and urban areas and the skill in practice and degree of access to the most effective means of contraception (Kenya Demographic & Health Survey, 1989).

Fertility and Educational Levels

The educational experiences of women have been found to be relevant to fertility patterns. Evidence from a national health survey shows that there is a inverse relationship between education and fertility. In 1989, Kenyan women with a secondary education had a lower recorded total fertility of 4.9 live births as compared to 5.6 live births for women with only primary education (KDHS, 1989). Women with no formal education had the highest total fertility rate of 7.2 children (Kenya Demographic & Health Survey, 1989). This comparison excluded the fertility rate of women with more than a secondary education, most likely because they would be the minority of Kenyan women.

Abortion Rates

Under the Kenyan penal code, abortion is considered a criminal act. Any woman who procures an abortion, if proven guilty is liable to imprisonment for a term of seven years (Oki Ooko-Ombaka, 1986). Despite the restrictive laws, illegally induced abortions is prevalent among young Kenyan women. This is even more so for the unmarried women in this age group, and particularly for those more highly educated and residing in the urban areas.

The reasons given for the high reliance on abortion by young Kenyan women include low use and accessibility of contraceptives combined with high rates of unintended pregnancies. For example, it was reported that 77 percent of first pregnancies to women 15-19 years of age were unintended (DHS, 1992). Further, the need to stay in school and the difficulties of combining schooling and childbearing force young women to rely on unsafe abortions as a way of controlling fertility. The stigma of unwed pregnancy for young women and mothers may also be a contributing factor to the resulting high abortion rates for this group (CPO, 1992).

Two particularly important reports from Kenya highlight the high incidence of unsafe and illegal abortions among young women. For example, one comprehensive report covering a sample size of 36,622 women admitted in Nairobi (urban setting) hospitals between 1974 - 1983, stated that 67 percent of deaths resulting from abortion complications, were to women 10-25 years of age (Wangala, Murugu & Mati, 1985). In a report on the epidemiology of abortion in Kenya, it was reported that out of 1077 women admitted with abortion complications, 53 percent were under the age of 24 years (Lema, Kamau & Rogo, 1989).

Despite the high risks associated with unsafe abortions and the strict imprisonment terms meted to these young women, it is reported that adolescents are still more likely to seek abortions, and to do so at advanced pregnancy stages. These young women are also reported to be slower in seeking medical attention when complications develop from dangerous abortion methods. These delays result in other complications including anemia, vaginal lacerations, pelvic abscesses and perforation of the uterus, secondary sterility and death in some cases. Abortions are not only costly to the young women, but also to the poorly equipped Kenyan hospitals and tight national health budgets (Center for Population Options, 1992).

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Sexually transmitted diseases are a resultant health issue associated with reproductive behavior. Reports from clinical studies of problems associated with sexual behavior indicate that 44 percent of women 15-24 being treated for an STD have had one or more incidences of STDs. The actual rates of different types of STDs are not indicated in this report (Mulandi, 1985).

There is little information on the incidence of AIDS among young men and women in Kenya. However, in 1990, it was reported that 36 percent of youth ages 15-24 who visited the Kenyatta National Hospital in Nairobi, had unspecified STDs (Lema, Makokha, Sanghvi & Wanjala, 1991).

The presence of sexually transmitted diseases during pregnancy have also been reported for Kenya. Of all cases of syphilis reported during pregnancy in Nairobi, 32 percent occurred in teenagers (Sanghvi, 1986). Sexually transmitted diseases, if untreated or inadequately treated, may lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). These diseases can subsequently lead to infertility or ectopic pregnancies. Syphilis and other sexually transmitted infections also lead to recurrent stillbirths (Sanghvi, 1986).

Infant Health and Mortality for Adolescent Mothers

The incidence of low birth weight and prematurity for the children of young mothers has been reported to be high in Kenya. Both the low birth weight and prematurity reportedly lead to an excess in perinatal mortality. The perinatal mortality rate for adolescents in Nairobi was 45 per 100 as compared to 35 percent for all mothers in Kenya (Sanghvi, 1986).

A comparison of infant mortality rates by age of mother in Kenya indicates that infants born to mothers under age 20 are at a greater risk of dying than infants of women in the middle of their reproductive years. Although there is no biological explanation for the relationship between infant mortality and age of mother, poor living conditions and inadequate accessibility to health and other social services are possible underlying causes for infant mortality. This is so because young women, who lack the knowledge, may also be unable to get the appropriate health care that they and their children need (Population Reference Bureau, 1992).

Empirical Research on Sexual Behavior

Sexual Activity

Sexual activity is a key component of reproductive behavior. Sexual activity includes petting, kissing and sexual intercourse. Information on patterns of sexual activity is useful to understand reproductive behavior, to identify the proportion of young adults who have never had sexual relations as well as those who are currently sexually active. In addition, such data help define the population of young adults potentially exposed to the risk of pregnancy (Zimbabwe Demographic & Health Survey, 1988).

Levels of Sexual Activity

Obtaining clear cut information about levels of sexual activity is difficult in any culture. A review of research reports from Kenya suggests that sexual activity has been used interchangeably with sexual intercourse and sexual experience. Evidence from the Demographic Health Surveys shows that sexual intercourse before age 20 is common among unmarried young women in Kenya. For example, these data indicate that from a sample of 1481 women, more than half of the young women aged 15-19 with sexual experience (defined as ever having had sexual intercourse), were not married (Demographic and Health Surveys, 1992).

Some estimates are higher as evidenced by data from a 1988 study to identify the family planning needs of young Kenyan women attending 20 colleges. In this study it was reported that up to 78 percent of unmarried women in the colleges, and in their early 20s were sexually experienced (Ferguson, Gitonga & Kabira, 1988).

Fertility Control

Once young women are sexually active, they are faced with the reality of conception. The issues of contraception, handling a pregnancy by either carrying the pregnancy to term, or having an abortion are ones with which many young women are unprepared to deal. The issues of contraception for young Kenyan women will be discussed below.

Many personal and social variables are related to the use of contraceptives. Thus while the availability of, and some knowledge about contraception are probably necessary conditions for contraceptive use, they are not sufficient to ensure contraceptive use. This has been demonstrated in studies conducted in Kenya to determine adolescents' level of contraceptive knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP). Results of these studies generally conducted on small samples indicate that although the general level of contraceptive awareness among adolescents in Kenya is high, the level of actual use is low (Aggarwal & Mati, 1982; Gachuhi, 1972; 1973; 1974; KCPS, 1984; Lema, 1987; Maggwa, 1987; Njoroge, 1985; Sanghvi, 1984;). According to one report in Kenya, 76 percent of women 15-19 years of age knew of a contraceptive method, yet only 4 percent ever used a modern contraceptive (PRB, 1992). Low levels of contraceptive use despite widespread knowledge may in part be a reflection of lack of need among the many young teenagers who want to start bearing children. However this low user rate may also be attributed to socio-cultural barriers that attach a stigma to use of contraception by teenagers and prevent teens from having access to different contraceptive methods (DHS &PRB, 1992).

Low user rates are also prevalent among young women 15-19 who are exposed to the risk of pregnancy. This group includes both sexually experienced young women who are married and unmarried. The proportion of users of modern contraceptives among married teenagers in Kenya is estimated to be 6 percent while it is only 2 percent for unmarried but sexually experienced teenagers (DHS, 1992).

In Kenya, use of traditional methods of contraception is more common than use of modern methods. Traditional methods include abstinence, natural family planning, also known as the rhythm method, and withdrawal. The proportion of unmarried, sexually experienced teenage women who reported using these methods was 12 percent (PRB, 1992).

At the national level, the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (1989) indicated that 21 percent of married women 20-24 years old were using contraceptives. A higher percentage (26 percent) of women 20-24 years old most commonly used the traditional methods. Among the reasons given by respondents for non-use of contraceptives included fear of side effects, infrequent sexual intercourse and the belief that the use of contraceptives is sinful (KDHS, 1989). While these data are for married women, they indicate the level of use of modern contraceptives among young women 20-24 who are exposed to the risk of pregnancy.

A study comprising a sample size of 3316 youth, ages 12-19, both in school and out of school, found that while 50 percent of those surveyed (the majority of whom were out of school youth) reported having had sexual relations, only 11 percent of them reported having used contraception (Ajayi, Marangu, Miller and Paxman,1991). A recent study of 597 young Kenyan women from 20 colleges of education revealed a rise in the proportion of women using contraceptives. Among the unmarried young women in the colleges, contraceptive user rates were found to be high, especially when abstinence was included as a method of family planning. The rates were recorded as 75.1 percent including abstainers, and 32.1 percent excluding abstainers. Thus those who are sexually active and using a method of contraception comprised 43 percent of the sample. However, the proportion of sexually active and unmarried women who were not using any form of contraception still comprised 25 percent of this sample. These women were, of course, considered to be the group most at risk of unwanted pregnancy (Ferguson, Gitonga & Kabira, 1988). It should be noted from these data that the inclusion of abstaining as a form of family planning inflates the user percentages.

Rural/Urban Differences in Contraceptive Use

While limited data are available, there is an indication that young rural women in Kenya infrequently use contraceptives. Reports of a 1987 Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice (KAP) survey of sex, contraception and teenage pregnancy among teenagers living in rural Kenya reported that only 2.6 percent of the girls aged between 12-23 years had ever used contraceptives. Eighty percent of these young women felt that the use of contraception was dangerous and sinful, while 79 percent of them felt that sex is not enjoyable when planned for. This negative attitude to the use of contraceptives was expressed by young women despite their high level of sexual activity (Maggwa, 1987). While this study used a wide age range, it indicated clearly that contraceptive use among young women in Kenya is very low. The results of this study are more in agreement with the 1992 Demographic and Health Surveys.

The information presented in this section is based on Demographic Health Surveys. Other information is based on evidence gathered from small samples. The methods used for reporting data may also contribute to inflating of data as is the case with the inclusion of 'abstaining' as a method of family planning (Ferguson, Gitonga & Kabira, 1988). Thus the picture presented may be an incomplete one. Additionally, survey methods of data collection are generally criticized because they are standardized and do not render themselves to deal with the context of social life. Critics state that the survey researcher can seldom develop the feel for the total life situation in which the respondents are thinking and acting (Babbie, 1989).

Summary

These data reviewed above are important because they indicate the patterns concerning age of initiation of sexual activity and use of contraception. These data have revealed that adolescents in Kenya have high levels of sexual activity and that they are engaging in sexual activities relatively early. An important factor to be taken into consideration here is that women's age at the time they begin sexual intercourse and subsequently experience child bearing, determines the length of time they will be exposed to the risk of pregnancy. Other things being equal, longer exposure to the risk of pregnancy impacts on the number of children women are likely to have in their reproductive years. Thus, the earlier women enter into sexual unions, the more children they are likely to bear.

The above review of literature has also demonstrated that even when sexually active young women have knowledge of contraception and are aware of contraceptive resources, differences in emotions, attitudes, norms and situational factors affect their contraceptive behavior. Thus, a large proportion of young women who are potentially exposed to the risk of pregnancy in Kenya do not use any form of contraception.

This review of literature has also revealed that most of the current research in Kenya is based on quantitative measures and has concentrated on the school going female population. Qualitative studies to complement the existing quantitative findings on these aspects of reproductive behavior are needed in order to provide a richer description of the meaning which young women attach to their life experiences. There is also a need to include out of school females, the majority of whom reside in the rural areas of Kenya and who are at a higher risk of early pregnancies and the spread of STD's including AIDS (CPO, 1992).

Gaps in Understanding Young Kikuyu Women's Reproductive Behavior

Magnitude versus Meaning

Review of various data in the literature indicate that no comprehensive studies have been conducted on the reproductive behavior of young women in sub Sahara Africa. The available evidence based on surveys, hospital records and empirical research findings presents a negative profile comprised of high levels of out of wedlock births, sexual activity, sexually transmitted diseases and abortions among young women in Kenya. These are key aspects of reproductive behavior. Although studies and reports reviewed point to the magnitude of certain aspects of reproductive behavior, they exclude the meaning young women attach to such patterns and experiences. Meaning is derived from the subjective perspectives and interpretations of the insider's life experiences that are related to reproductive behavior. Quantitative approaches do not allow psychological space for the insider's subjective interpretation of their life experiences. Such psychological space is the opportunity to share one's own views about the phenomenon under study. Detailing the subjective meaning of these life experiences for young women is needed to complement the quantitative research findings. Data gathered from qualitative studies are useful in generating hypotheses for developing a new knowledge base.

The needs of young transrural Kenyan women have to be understood in the context of social, cultural and economic realities if practical solutions are to be found (Gachuhi, 1985; Migot-Adholla, 1985). When a society has conflicting and ambiguous ideas about the needs of a segment of its population, the emerging results in policy and practice are based on a vacuum of rational clear guidelines and a possible misinterpretation of the values to which young people react as they come to terms with their developing sexuality (Cook & Wilson, 1982).

The sexual behavior and reproductive patterns of young people are highly susceptible to social influences and related to their own sense of psychological well-being (WHO, 1989). One could argue that the social position of the young people would affect the activities they engage in, their perceived well being, and the social network of friendship. No data are available on the ways in which social attitudes affect the reproductive behavior of young people. Rather, people speculate on the possible factors that influence this phenomenon.

Data are needed to understand the relationship between young people's perception of their social situation, the effect the perceptions have on their reproductive behavior, and social network factors and attitudes towards reproductive behavior.

Minimizing Personal and Social Costs

Early sexual activity and premature childbearing has serious implications for Kenya at both the macro and micro levels. Births to young women impact heavily on Kenya's population growth rate which is already the highest in the world. The increasing population growth rate by dependent women 15-24 has adverse social consequences for society at large. In addition to bearing additional costs for maternal and child health, society is overburdened with limited educational opportunities, job prospects, social services, and the inability to meet basic needs for people, such as food and shelter (PRB, 1992). Births to this group of young women also further contribute to the marginalization of these women and their children as these women are likely to lack the education and the skills needed to conduct their parental roles and to do so effectively in today's more demanding and changing social cultural conditions.

Improving Personal Decision Making

The evidence demonstrates that young people in Kenya are sexually active at young ages, and that there is an increase in sexually transmitted diseases as well as other reproductive health problems. These statistics make a major contribution by indicating the magnitude of the problem. The limited research conducted to date however does not detail the perceptions of young people of their reproductive behavior. Further, no studies have been specifically conducted in areas that are in transition from a rural to an urban way of life. Qualitative methods are needed to explore and understand the individual's subjective perspectives and interpretations of the decisions involved in reproductive behavior of young people. Until the factors that influence the reproductive behavior of young people are understood, efforts in developing programs, whether educational or service oriented, are likely to report limited success.

Finally, in light of the evidence that early initiation of sexual activity and early childbearing are on the rise in sub Sahara Africa, lack of educational programs to help young people understand human reproduction and make intelligent decisions regarding their fertility may be a contributing factor to the rising rates of early pregnancy. In Kenya, for example,the secondary school curriculum excludes information on the anatomy and physiology of reproduction. For example, the topics covered include childbirth, but not how conception occurs (Kigondu, 1986b; Sanghvi, 1986b). In addition, there is no discussion about developing male/female relationships or decision making about childbearing (Marangu, Ethangatta & Mugenda, 1988; Muchina, 1989). Efforts to include sex related education into the curriculum have had little success (Kabira, 1986). The same argument can be put forth to address the lack of services to assist youth in contraception.

Summary

Studies presented in this review indicate a rise in early childbearing in Kenya and complications that relate to this pattern. Such a pattern has high socioeconomic costs to the young woman and the Kenyan society at large. Further, the review clearly indicates that the Kikuyu familial network has been greatly influenced by the interface of various aspects of socio-cultural change. Data have shed light on the effects of education, religion and the demands of the changing society on the familial structure of the Kikuyu people. All these interrelated forces have contributed to the breakdown of the traditional Kikuyu moral influence of the family, neighborhood and community, thereby removing the roles played by the extended kin and limiting them to the more independent nuclear family sphere. The transitional effects of the breakdown of the traditional moral influence of the family, neighborhood and community and the increasing influence of peers may shape the reproductive behavior of young Kenyan women.

The review of existing data has helped to justify the research questions for this study. The review has revealed that there is little information about the young woman's perspective of her life experiences related to reproductive behavior. Three gaps were identified in the existing literature regarding reproductive behavior of young women living in a transrural environment. First, no data in the literature reviewed focuses on the subjective experience of the young women in their reproductive behavior. Secondly, no data are available on the ways in which changing social attitudes affect the reproductive behavior of young people. Thirdly, data are lacking with respect to how family factors influence the reproductive behavior of young people.

Culture-specific data are required in order to develop relevant theories and to offer guidelines for program development and sexual education in Kenya. Due to the identified gaps in the literature, it is imperative that the subjective perspective and the factors involved in influencing the reproductive behavior of young people be investigated. Since previous research has concentrated on the rise and magnitude of early pregnancy and childbearing, qualitative methods have been chosen for the proposed study in order to seek an understanding of these concerns from the insider's point of view.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The research questions that are posed for any area of inquiry determine the methods by which the investigation proceeds. The research approach should therefore be "selectively and appropriately used according to the nature of the problem and what is known about the phenomenon to be studied" (Field & Morse, 1985).

This chapter includes a description of a qualitative inquiry about young women's reproductive behavior, and provide a detailed description of the specific methods used for data collection and data analysis. The impressions of the research setting and management strategies for research on adolescent fertility in a developing world context are also included.

A Qualitative Inquiry into Women's Reproductive Behavior

The questions in this study about reproductive behavior addressed a phenomenon about which there are limited data. The research focused on the insider perspectives and life experiences of young women living in a transrural setting. It required a rich, in-depth and detailed description of a wide range of life experiences making up the broad conceptualization of reproductive behavior and a search for the relationship between and among these concepts. The exploration into a previously unresearched area was particularly suited to the use of qualitative methodology. This approach "can take us into the mental world of the individual, to glimpse the categories and logic by which he or she sees the world. It can also take us into the life world of the individual, to see the content and pattern of daily experience" (McCracken, 1988).

The qualitative method is at best an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques used by the researcher to explore the subjective meanings which individuals give to their lives. Most of the qualitative methods share a preoccupation with analyzing the social contexts and routine social processes of daily life (Lareau, 1987).

Qualitative research methods are used when the intent of the researcher is to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the "meaning" of certain more-or-less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world. Meaning is the interpretation that informants place on rules and behavior that takes place from the position of the insider. The depth of meaning is developed through the interacting subject and researcher. Qualitative methods aim to identify behavior as a way of assessing their meaning, and to record the pattern of responses which these behaviors elicit (Field & Morse, 1985; van Maanen, Dabbs & Faulkner, 1982).

There are many qualitative research approaches to the study of everyday experiences. Each approach arises from a difference in the concerns about life experiences held by the social scientist (Field & Morse, 1985). The methods are used to develop concepts, generate and test hypotheses, and to provide as accurately as possible in-depth descriptions of what is happening from the insider's view. The approach chosen for this study was descriptive ethnography. An overview of this approach follows.

Ethnography

Ethnography is a systematic firsthand study of a culture that attempts to discover the knowledge a group of people have and are using to organize their behavior (Field, 1983). It aims at cultural meanings that enable people to understand themselves and interpret their life experiences (Fetterman, 1989). Because it entails an in-depth investigation of culture and cultural components, ethnography leads to a higher level of concept comprehension. The focus of ethnography is a single cultural domain, or a few related domains, and the relationships of such domains to the rest of the cultural scene (Spradley, 1980).

Descriptive Ethnography

Descriptive ethnography has been defined to comprise a description of the perspectives people have on aspects of their life experiences (Field, 1983). A perspective is a combination of beliefs and behaviors composed of (a) a definition of various situations, (b) actions, and (c) criteria of judgement (Field, 1983). Thus the product of descriptive ethnography is s rich description of peoples' definition of their situation and their actions and criteria of judgement. Descriptive ethnography, therefore allows the researcher into the world of the individuals who are studied, to see the content and pattern of daily experience.

Management of Qualitative Research in a Developing World Context

Conducting qualitative research on adolescent fertility in a developing world context demanded unique management strategies. For this reason, a model to facilitate the management of a qualitative research study in Kenya was developed and utilized (Waiyaki & Kieren, 1991). The model included these major management activities: delimiting the research to handle the accessibility issues of research sites, language and dialect, travel and communication difficulties; preplanning to accommodate government research limitations, develop appropriate interviewing techniques given language and cultural issues, timing and insider-outsider perspectives of the researcher; resourcing to identify "way makers" to assist in entering the community; networking to interact with other on site researchers for support and ongoing critique of the qualitative work; communicating effectively with various stakeholders during the data collection phase of the study, and anticipating and respecting the ethical, political and research implications of the form of reporting of the findings.

Delimiting

Delimiting is the process of establishing appropriate limits for the study given the nature of the problem, the research techniques or approach, the desired outcomes and the available resources. To satisfactorily handle this management issue, the researcher did a careful "research scan" of the basic triangle of research problem, process and resources. The problem needed to have boundaries placed around it that clarified the focus, clearly identified the group to be studied, and took into account the unique aspects of studying the group, in that setting, using the method of choice. Consideration of all three elements were handled in concert with one another. While the resources were firmer "givens", in that the researcher knew what financial support was available, the other elements could be changed.

Travel distances to research sites, language and dialect issues, availability of housing and the choice of an intensive qualitative research method demanding involvement of a single researcher in data collection and analysis were the key factors which guided the delimitation of the present study. The study site was identified as a transrural area within a reasonable distance from housing and other resources, affording ready access by the researcher. People residing in the study site also spoke Kikuyu. Limiting the participants to those who spoke a common language and one which was spoken and understood by the researcher was an important delimitation in a country with people who speak over 42 languages. Many of these languages have different dialects. For example, the Kikuyu language has three different dialects namely Gikuyu, Embu and Meru.

Preplanning

An important step in the preplanning stage was the acquisition of the ethical clearance and research permit. This involved meeting the criteria set out for research with human subjects by the institution of affiliation in the originating country as well as in the research country. It also involved obtaining a governmental research permit from the developing country. Thus the researcher had to initiate this process a few months prior to the official time of embarking on data collection.

The preplanning stage also involved piloting of the research questions. For the proposed study, people in the university community who spoke Kikuyu were interviewed in order to assess whether the research questions were properly worded, whether the sequence of questioning was appropriate and whether the questions could be understood. The researcher's professional and cultural background qualified the researcher to undertake an in-depth collection of qualitative data to develop meaning of reproductive behavior as it was perceived by young women aged 15-24.

The researcher's advantages were several. First the research was to be conducted in a community in close proximity to where this researcher had worked as a University lecturer for eight years. Secondly, the researcher had at various times conducted Home Economics outreach programs within the local communities in the area. Thirdly, the researcher had previously conducted a study in the communities over a period of two years. And finally the research was to be conducted in a common language and one which is spoken by the researcher.

In retrospect, my professional and cultural background provided an invaluable resource in that I was aware of the cultural behaviors and many of the expectations of the Kikuyu people. However when one conducts outreach programs and quantitative research, the interaction with people is different from that which is focused on seeking information about people's lived experiences. The outreach programs consisted of demonstrations of a skill to the members of the communities. The quantitative research approach which was utilized in a previous study, on the other hand, sought an understanding of the cause and effect, while the qualitative approach sought first hand knowledge about experiences of a group in a social milieu. This type of research also called for key informants to share their cultural rules of behavior.

Even though the researcher was a Kenyan, and therefore an "insider" by birth, the fact that she had lived outside of Kenya for some time required the acknowledgment of insider-outsider issues at the preplanning and implementation stages of the research. All researchers develop their own expectations and assumptions about other people and allow these ethnocentric biases to influence them in the research context. Also researchers conducting research in their own culture may miss out on what is really significant in a familiar situation in which they have grown up. This familiar state of affairs precipitates the insider/outsider question in ethnography as well as issues of objectivity and subjectivity in qualitative research. While there may not be simple answers to these concerns, the style of work to be expected of an insider is likely to be different from an outsider. An insider's behavior is likely to be different from an outsider's. As an insider, the preplanning involved designing research strategies that gave respondents more psychological space, such as giving respondents additional opportunities to state their perspectives in their own words.

This preplanning was helpful to handle insider bias, however during the in-depth interviews, it became apparent that the researcher was an outsider as well as an insider. There were times I felt ideally so close to the community, that I thought I understood their values and assumptions, but there were also many other times when I realized that I did not understand their views. For example, while I thought my traditional views on marriage were similar to those of other Kikuyu people, the young women described 'marriage' differently. It became clear that I had my own biases. I knew there were acceptable rules in the Kikuyu tradition regarding marriage, and I was aware that the marriage process occurred in certain ways, but I learned of other rules in the transitional setting such as young women's views about living with young men.

By virtue of my primary socialization, I found myself riddled with my own biases and had to make efforts to overcome these biases. The study of another segment of my own society helped to create in me a sense of detachment that made me realize that I was also an outsider in my own place of origin. The preparation of a personal journal as described in the next section provided a means of overcoming these biases.

Resourcing

This involved gathering the necessary knowledge, information, consultants, and equipment to carry out the research. Resourcing was carried out in two areas because research was to be conducted some distance from the base university. For example, interviewing researchers who had expertise in qualitative studies became critical in the field study area. Qualitative researchers in the country where the research was to be conducted were identified prior to field work. They served as the social support to fall back upon for advice and critique of the work being carried out. Since they were knowledgeable about the subject of interest and were influential people in the communities, they were the "way makers" who helped the researcher gain entry into the community and lay the ground work for future communication with community members.

The possible sensitivity of people to some equipment, such as tape recorders and making photographic records, was taken into consideration. Such equipment was only used if it was acceptable to informants and with their approval.

Networking and Communicating

Networking with other professionals created a chain of useful resources in establishing contacts, identifying supportive institutions and key community leaders. This networking was also useful in facilitating entry into the community, establishing and developing trust with key informants.

Researchers must communicate with many stakeholders in a research study. For example, for this study a communication triangle was established between a study-site adviser, the supervisor and thesis committee and the student researcher.

Communication became an important focus since sexual behavior is a sensitive topic. For example, the issues of how to tell people what was to be studied became critical as well as the issues of demarcating roles, being able to distance oneself while at the same time being empathetic to community members.

Reporting

Reporting for the completed study involved translating the already transcribed materials from a local language into English. This called for the involvement at times of people who spoke the local language to offer critical reviews of the research data.

A researcher has a responsibility to report research findings to participants. This reporting must be compiled with respect for the anonymity and confidentiality of research participants. A wrap up session will be held after the final report is completed (Punch, 1986; Van Maanen, 1984).

Research Setting

Selection of a research setting is shaped by the nature of the research question, the desired sample and the various accessibility factors. The questions in this study directed the researcher to a rural area in transition that had a population which included young women between 15-24 years of age.

Njoro division was chosen as the research site due to its transrural characteristics. In contrast to a rural area, Njoro division is primarily a farming area which is closely adjacent to the newer urban influences such as major roads, educational institutions, tourism facilities and factories as well as major business enterprises. Proximity of these structures to an area increased the potential of interaction with the outside world. This interaction gave this community an advantage over villages in the deep interior in terms of communication and transportation and created a challenge to its traditional way of life. The following description creates a clearer picture of the community setting.

The first impression that one gets on visiting the research communities in Njoro division is the poor quality of roads and the difficult conditions one experiences when driving a car. Although this area is undergoing development in terms of the infrastructure, it was apparent from the first visit that the use of cars is not always practical due to either large potholes on the common land roads or due to in-roads that lead to dead-ends. In most cases one is forced to park the car and walk the remaining distance to many locations.

The research communities were within a 10-14 km radius from the divisional headquarters in Njoro. The family housing units differ within the same communities. For example, one can drive through an area of mud huts, where there are no pit latrines to an area where there are fairly sophisticated houses within ten minutes of each other.

Njoro division generally has had an influx of workers due to the rapidly developing institutions and business enterprises. This influx of workers has created a new demand for housing, and other social amenities. Most of the land owners who have several plots ranging from 2.5-5.0 acres have subdivided their land into 1/4 acre plots which they sell at a high profit. The majority of the people who can afford to buy those plots are outsiders to the area. These outsiders put up new housing units for the workers in the area. Most of the new upcoming houses do not fit in with the already built structures. These houses are built from concrete and have tiled or galvanized sheeting roofs and glass windows, modern kitchens and toilets within the buildings. Some of the houses have water in them while others may have only a common water tap within the compound of the building plot.

The farms in the research area also have varying differences in the activities that take place. Some farms are large made up of acreages of wheat while some may be small plots of 2.5 acres on which are found a few mud and grass thatched huts or wooden houses that have metal sheeting. In such plots, mainly subsistence food crops such as maize, beans and kale are grown for family use.

Upcoming business enterprises in Njoro division are diverse and are dependent on the needs of the workers. It is interesting, for instance to walk through bushes, and locally made small 'bridges' over the running water from a major river, into a small wooden building that is a fast food mini-restaurant for chips and sausages, yoghurt, and soft drinks. Next to that hotel may be a butchery where people select the meat they wish to have roasted for them. The meat is usually eaten with a thick gruel like mixture of maize meal and hot water called *ugali,* or with fried kale leaves.

In these communities, dwell people of considerably different income levels and life styles. These people range from laborers who work in institutions and business enterprises to senior professors and government officers who have acquired small plots and have put up modern housing in the area and large scale farmers who own over 1000 acres of land within the Njoro division.

Many children in these communities attend school especially in their younger ages. It is difficult to give the statistics of those who are actually in full attendance throughout the year because many are registered in schools but only attend occasionally. Many children are periodically expelled due to the failure to pay assessments for building funds, text books or stationery or school uniforms. Thus, early in the school term, one notices an exodus of expelled primary and secondary school children returning to their homes.

A Day in the Life of Women of Njoro

The majority of women in these communities are subsistence farmers and homemakers who work on their small plots of land and support their families from the sale of crops such as vegetables, tomatoes, kale, potatoes, or maize and beans. Other women rent plots of land for cultivation. They are assisted by their daughters in their busy daily activities. An activity such as food preparation for the family can be a major task for the women. For example, the main staple diet for the families includes dry maize and beans. Cooking a combination of maize and beans (*githeri)* takes an average of 6 hours on a 3-stone firewood stove.

Daughters of these women between the ages of 15-24 were the respondents in this study. Some of the young women had dropped out of school due to pregnancies and were living with their parents and raising their children from the support they were receiving from their families. There was a pattern of high primary school female enrollment in the communities but more than half the population of young women had dropped out of school by the time they finished primary level education. Reasons for their drop out varied from lack of school fees to lack of interest in formal education. For example, a large proportion of these women believed that education did not offer upward mobility and therefore they had no motivation for education beyond primary school levels. Of this proportion, some believed that they would eventually be employed as maids. However, most of the young women dropped out of school due to pregnancy related reasons. In most cases these young women were in relationships that other community members considered to be unstable. Out of the nine respondents who participated in this study, two were school drop outs with an average of six years of primary education. Both had children in their teenage years. Four of the respondents were high school drop outs, two of whom had dropped out at Form IV.

Three of these respondents had dropped out of high school due to pregnancy. Only one respondent dropped out of school due to lack of school fees. Three of the primary key informants were still in school, one at the primary level and the other two were in secondary schools.

The activities of young women in this community generally complemented those of their mothers. Such activities included land preparation, planting and harvesting as well as homemaking activities such as collecting firewood and water as well as cooking and cleaning their houses. There were a small number of these women who carried out extra income generating activities such as selling some of their crocheted sweaters, or plaiting hair or sewing women's dresses. Overall, however, their lives were occupied by basic duties in the home and agricultural duties. Expanded descriptions of two female respondents' lives are included in the Appendix.

Study Methods

Entry into the Community

Entry into the community was sought at three levels. After gaining a permit to conduct research in Njoro division, other contacts were made at both the district and divisional levels. The first contact was with the office of the District Commissioner (DC) in Nakuru. This contact was made to notify the DC that formal approval to conduct research in the district had been granted by the President's office.

The second meeting was held at the divisional level with the chief of Njoro division. At this meeting a research permit to conduct the research was requested and a verbal approval was granted by the chief to proceed with the research procedures. The researcher was also directed by the chief to the Home Economics

Extension Officer who was viewed as a person who knew the families well to seek information on how to make contacts with potential key informants.

The third meeting was held with the Home Economics officers. At this meeting the research topic and the procedures to be followed to accomplish the goals of the study were discussed. The researcher also sought information as to how to contact the primary key informants for the study. A further meeting was set for another day at which time the researcher and the Home economics officers met with one Women's Group members. This meeting was attended by 36 members. The researcher discussed the nature of the study to be conducted and the desired characteristics of the potential key informants. The members of this Women's Group were also notified that information would also be sought of other members of the community (key secondary informants) who would include the potential partners of the young women, parents, teachers, doctors, and clergy. It was clearly stated that the researcher's role was to learn from community members about their life experiences, and not to provide professional advice or services. Preliminary contacts were made at this meeting after which the chairperson of the Women's Group, accompanied by Home Economics officers, visited some of the homes and met with some potential key informants. No definite arrangements for interviews were made during the initial contacts, to protect the anonymity of any potential informants. First visits to these homes provided essential information about the location of key informants' homes because there are no street or door numbers identifying the homes. The researcher had to create her own map of the community by counting the in-roads, gates, or noting key landmarks (e.g. a big pothole, a church or a farm with a wheat plantation). Other homes were visited at a later date through another guided tour conducted by the Home economics officers and the subchief of the area.

Establishing Trust

To establish trust, the researcher found it necessary to engage in regular tasks that were comprehensible to the informants in the Njoro area. For example, the researcher went to the open air market at least once a week and bought farm produce such as vegetables and fruits. The researcher found it easy to initiate discussions with the women selling their produce because of the bargaining that takes place between those buying and those selling fruits and vegetables in the market. Bargaining is part of any type of shopping in Kenya and many of the traders would be heard calling out to the "customer" or *murata wakwa* (my friend) in an effort to gain more customers. Traders were also often heard to say, *"ningukuongerera murata wakwa*, and or "customer." Traders would lure customers to their area by this strategy thus discussions were easily initiated by the researcher even though at first it was through bargaining for an extra 'tomato', 'potato', 'green banana' or 'onion'.

Trust was also quickly established in the communities because the first introduction of the researcher to the community was through the Home Economics Extension officers. These officers interacted with the community members on a regular basis. The officers held demonstrations in the community on various topics of the women's interest. For example, they taught women how to maximize the use of their produce by food conservation such as drying and dehydration, or in collaboration with the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) officials demonstrated how to build water tanks. Liaising with the sub-chief of the area was important in the establishment of trust. A sub-chief is a prominent member of the community who commands a great deal of respect and also represents the government. A teacher who had been first met through the sub-chief and who was born and raised in one of the communities commanded a great deal of respect. She was influential in my initial contacts and subsequent visits to her home area.

Church attendance was also an important activity for many community members. Thus the researcher took part in church activities. Church activities included church fund raising, as well as involvement in the arrangements for burials and weddings. During the burial arrangements, the researcher took part in cooking for hundreds of people who visited the homes of two deceased persons at different times. It was difficult at such times to maintain a purely researcher's role due to the assistance needed of the researcher in accomplishing tasks during the funeral time. For example, when salt was needed from the "kiosk" a few kilometers from the home, and I was the 'youngest' person available who also was in possession of a car, I had to forfeit the role of a researcher and drive to the kiosk at the request of the widow. At another crucial moment, flowers to make wreaths for one of the funerals had to be picked up from a garden and I was again requested to go and pick them up.

While it is vital that one keep the researcher's role, there are occasions such as the above, and emergencies that take one outside of that role and call for action. An emergency occurred at one time when the researcher had to drive an infant to the hospital.

Selection of Key Informants

The primary key informants for this study were women 15-24 years old. They included those who were in school and out of school as well as those who were employed or not, and those who have already had children or not. The secondary key informants included young women's potential partners, clergy, teachers, and parents.

Selection of key informants in ethnography is guided by an ethnographer's experientially informed judgements. Informants may be selected by virtue of their status, for example, age, sex and occupation (Johnson, 1990). Sampling of key informants therefore is done on the basis of the quality of information and how informants best describe the phenomenon of interest. For this study, women in the age group 15-24 were considered to be knowledgeable and to best understand the phenomenon of interest.

The initial contacts of these women were made through members of a women's group who consisted of mothers of these young women. Other young women were met during home visits that were initiated through the Njoro division Home Economics officers. Still others were met through contacts initiated by the sub-chief of the area. Thus the most useful source of obtaining the primary key informants was by word of mouth.

The criteria which were used to select primary key informants were as follows:

1. The informants were females between the ages of 15-24 who were currently residing in Njoro.
2. The participants were limited to those who understood and spoke the Kikuyu language fluently.
3. All participants were selected on the understanding that they were willing to participate in a minimum of two two-hour interviews.
4. All participants were willing to examine their lived experiences, to share these experiences and to have the interviews recorded either in the form of written notes, and/or tape recorded.

Description of Respondents

Nine primary key informants were contacted through visits to their homes. All of these respondents lived in eight communities (Njokerio, Ahero, Ngongogeri, Mwigito, Eriithia, Egerton/Ng'ondu, Mukungugu, and Njoro township) surrounding a 10 to 14 kilometer radius in a transrural area in Kenya. Table I(Appendix) describes their demographic characteristics.

Three of the primary key informants were met through the Njoro division Home Economics officer, four through a Women's Group chairperson, and two through the sub-chief of the area. The objectives of the study as well as data collection methods to be applied during the course of the study were discussed with the key informants. All primary key informants were notified that a series of interviews will be held over a period of approximately six months and that each of the interviews would last from 2-3 hours. Verbal consent was sought at the first meeting in which the informants were asked to voice any concerns that they may have had regarding any of the data collection methods that could be used to collect the data. No concerns were raised. The informants were then notified that the agreement was noted, but that in the event of other forms of data aids being used (e.g. photography), further permission would be obtained.

Sample adequacy refers to the sufficiency of variation in experiences of the phenomenon of interest. The exact number of the primary key informants that would participate in this study could not be determined before hand, however the actual sample size was determined by the depth, adequacy, quality and completeness of the information gathered from the key informants.

Eight secondary key informants were interviewed. They included a psychologist, two teachers, two mothers who worked at home, an educational administrator, a health professional and one chief. These secondary informants were selected because they were deemed to be good sources of information about young women's reproductive behavior.

The Interviewing Process

Two types of interviews were conducted. The first type involved interviewing of women who were selected as the primary key informants. Four of the nine primary key informants were interviewed twice. Five of the informants were interviewed once. In total, 13 interviews were conducted.

The interviews lasted between 2-3 hours with the average length being 2 1/2 hours for all the interviews. All interviews were conducted in the homesteads of the parents of the young women. Thus some were conducted under the shade of the trees in the compounds and others in the houses. The interviews conducted in the house were all in the visitors' living room which was separate from the kitchen. Basically the interview time was set for the morning hours but usually ran into the afternoon hours. One primary key informant was interviewed after 6.30 p.m. after she arrived home from school. In each case, the key informants were asked to suggest an interview location in which they felt comfortable and which offered them privacy.

The second type of interviews were conducted with the secondary informants. These secondary informants were used to expand or clarify perspectives on this complex issue. The use of this rich mixture of key informants provided a broad understanding of the factors which influence young women's reproductive behavior.

Eight secondary key informants were interviewed. They were all interviewed on an individual basis. Two secondary informants were interviewed twice. In addition, eight young men were interviewed in a focus group situation.

All interviews were in-depth, open-ended, face-to-face and unstructured. This style of interviewing provided the informants with the psychological space to share their perception of their lived experiences in their own words. The style also provided the researcher with an opportunity to clarify and pursue particular topics of interest as portrayed by the key informants. Half the interviews were audio recorded.

The first question for all the primary key informants commenced with a general question that allowed the informants to organize and discuss their unique lived experiences. This question consisted of asking the primary key informants to discuss their view of the family. Such a broad question was a comfortable way to introduce questions about reproductive behavior. The pilot test of the interview revealed that this question did in fact allow follow-up questions on reproductive behavior.

Second interviews were conducted with three of the primary key informants in order to verify the information previously gathered from primary key informants regarding the reproductive behavior of young women in Njoro division. The interview questions for the secondary key informants were focused, in that they were geared towards obtaining information to clarify the information gathered from the primary key informants. The secondary key informants were asked questions that either related to their own life experiences with respect to reproductive behavior or their perceptions of young women's reproductive behavior.

Time Tabling

Early in the study, it was realized that the timelines that had been established for the study would be affected by cultural practices and behaviors of the Kikuyu community. For example, it was expected that when one visited a home, tea and in many cases food were offered. It took great effort on the part of the host to cook the food on a 3 stone firewood stove, with water which in many cases had to be fetched from a river and firewood that was virtually non-existent. The researcher waited a couple of times for tea to be made using maize stalks and the process would take at least three quarters of an hour. It would have been considered impolite to refuse food or tea especially if it was the researcher's first visit to the home.

Other time constraints on the time evolved from the time needed to attend to community events. For example, when there was death in the community, all families in the area would visit the home of the deceased. Those visits interrupted their schedules in their own homes and consequently the research schedule. The same interruption occurred when there was preparation for weddings or fund raising events to sponsor various activities.

The research schedule was also interrupted by the time taken to communicate messages to key informants. For example, if I was interested in interviewing a potential key informant, I would first visit their home areas, locate the home and set up an appointment and then return for interviewing at a later date. Sometimes if the potential key informant was home and could spare the time, I was granted the first interview. Lack of working telephones presented a major drawback on the research time limit as well as lack of transportation for government personnel. The researcher had to provide transportation and essentially borrow on the research time.

For the reasons cited above, a flexible timetable was set to allow for unforeseen circumstances. However, two alternate days in a week were set for interviews and the corresponding late afternoons for the transcription and the translating of the interviews into the English language. Soon after the interviews were held the researcher looked for a place to sit and reflect on the interview, to write analytical memos and a personal journal. Similarly two days were set for the typing of the materials and for working on the previously unfinished business.

Data Analysis Methods

The descriptive ethnographic method required that the investigator simultaneously collect and analyze data. The qualitative nature of this research approach demanded a very early initiation of this process in order to identify interrelationships between concepts, to categorize and link them. This collection and analysis of data and the clarification of concepts was done on a continuous basis. Because only about half of the interviews were audio recorded an important part of the interviewing process for non-taped interviews was taking detailed notes which were expanded immediately after the interview into a composite record of the interview. Actual statements made by respondents were recorded where possible. Notes taken during the actual interviewing were of necessity condensed. These accounts included phrases, single words, and unconnected sentences. The interviews were conducted in Kikuyu, but notes were typically recorded in English. However, it became necessary to record some of the notes and or phrases in Kikuyu especially when they were found to consist of rich detail and where a translation would have distorted their meaning. An expanded version of the interview notes was written after each interviewing session to fill in the details that were not recorded on the spot. The phrases jotted down in the actual interviewing process were used to create the expanded account.

Since the research goal for the proposed study was to provide a rich description of the reproductive behavior of young women living in a transrural context, the analysis involved searching for dynamic descriptors that would provide as complete a picture as possible, and which would identify commonalities as well as differences among the views of respondents. The initial analysis of the expanded interviews utilized the definition of reproductive behavior as a guide to code comments. The researcher looked for comments and discussions which illustrated each of the nine categories of reproductive behavior which were a part of the initial research definition specified in Chapter 1. These categories included preparation for reproductive roles, stages of relationship development, choosing life partners, fertility patterns, preparation for family formation, knowledge, attitudes, sexual behavior and health problems. Next the examples in the data which were associated with each of these nine categories were reviewed to identify emergent themes or concepts which described that particular aspect of reproductive behavior. Several reviews of the examples were necessary to move from very specific examples to more general examples that could combine several concepts. Analytical memos were written by the researcher to show the researcher's records of analysis of the patterns that existed in the data. Memos included an analysis of the information gathered from the primary and secondary key informants as well as the analysis of observations made by the researcher on the social context. These included records of observations of community activities and event analysis that were carried out in order to gain access to an understanding of the special meaning people attached to their subjective experiences.

After the themes were identified and given names, the examples of these themes were collected together as vignettes that described each emergent theme representing the nine identified categories. As this process continued the nine definition categories were collapsed into three main areas: development and evolution of relationships, preparation for reproduction, reproduction in social context. This was accomplished by combining similar areas under these three topics. These areas represented important sub-processes in the entirety of the young women's reproductive behavior. The researcher wrote field notes to describe these sub-processes as they were illustrated in the data. Field notes are an integral part of an ethnographic record because they allow the researcher to describe in rich detail the social processes and their contexts. The aim is to capture these processes in their integrity, noting their various features and properties. These notes guided the researcher in formulating plans for subsequent interviews.

The Journal

The researcher also kept a personal journal as a means of handling insider and outsider bias and a record of personal ideas about the data. The researcher's journal consisted of records of the experiences, ideas, hunches, confusions and problems that arose during the field work and newspaper clippings that reflected the current themes in the media. The journal represented the researcher's thoughts and concerns as well as the reactions to informants and the feelings that the researcher sensed from other people who were contacted during the course of the research process. Developing this introspective record enabled the researcher to take into account personal biases or assumptions that could have influenced data collection and analysis. Each journal entry was dated, and respondents were referred to by code number.

To supplement the interview data, articles that related to women and family issues were collected. These included literature related to young people's behavior in Kenya, in order to provide contextual information. This information was cited and discussed in the journals.

Reliability and Validity

The value of scientific research is partially dependent on the ability of the researcher to demonstrate the credibility of his or her findings (Le Compte & Goetz, 1984). The credibility and true value of qualitative research resides in its ability to discover and fit the reality of its subjects (Field & Morse, 1985; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The primary objective of the qualitative researcher is thus to accurately conceptualize and to describe the lived experience of the informants. Measurement and control are not the goal of ethnographic research but rather the objective is to obtain data that are comprehensive, relevant and detailed (Morse, 1989).

To minimize threats to validity, verification of content, memo and journal reviews were incorporated through triangulation of multiple sources. Triangulation is the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). To accomplish this task, information obtained from informants was verified by asking others about the same content. The multiple sources of data included community members such as educators, young women's potential partners,and the clergy. This form of triangulation involved the comparison of data relating to the same phenomena either from informants or derived from different phases of the field work.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the Ethical Review Committee of the Faculty of Home Economics at the University of Alberta. In Kenya the research proposal was reviewed by the Kenya National Council for Science and Technology. A research permit from the President's office was issued after this review.

The key informants' anonymity was protected by the use of a code number for the community, the type of informant (primary or secondary), and the sex of the informant. To ensure informant confidentiality, information obtained during data collection was only discussed with the on-site supervisors, and the thesis advisory committee.

The following chapter will include a detailed description of the research findings for this study.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

Fetterman (1989) suggests that ethnographic products are carefully selected notes that give details of a cultural context in a concise but complete fashion. These detailed thick descriptions incorporate the insider's meaning, and the researcher's analysis and interpretation. Ideally such a description allows a researcher to share the participants' understanding of a situation with a reader. An important characteristic of these descriptions in this study is the verbatim quotations that illuminate the nine young Kikuyu women's perspectives about their reproductive behavior and the factors which influence that behavior. In addition, the perspectives of sixteen secondary informants including parents, male partners and community leaders enriched this description.

Although all of the stories were unique in some ways, during the data analysis it became obvious that there were common themes in their reports. In this chapter, the data about reproductive behavior are reported in a stage-wise manner moving from early socialization to participation in reproductive decisions. The chapter is organized into three main sections based on the basic categories developed earlier as part of methodology beginning with preparation for reproduction, moving to the development of the evolution of relationships, and concluding with reproductive behavior in context. Each section includes an introduction to the section which is followed by an outline and discussion of the common themes which were revealed in these data. Illustrations are provided in the form of vignettes. The source of each vignette is identified by a code number indicating the key informant's code (e.g. Mt), age (e.g. 22 yrs.), whether a primary informant (e.g. Pki), years of education (e.g. 6 pri = 6 years primary), whether still in school or a school dropout (e.g. dropout), and number of children. The codes for secondary informant varied from those of primary key informants in that they indicated whether the informant was male or female (e.g. M, F) , age (e.g. 45 yrs) , secondary key informant (e.g. Ski), position in society (e.g. teacher), and whether they were parents (e.g. parents). The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

Preparation for Reproduction

One key element to understand reproductive behavior is to look at how people were prepared for it. For this study the nature of preparation for reproduction is reflected in the stories that were shared by key informants. Factors to focus on in the understanding of preparation for reproduction include the sources of information, the timing, the adequacy of the information and the relationship of these factors to the attitudes and actual behavior related to a phenomena. These beliefs and attitudes are formed in early socialization before sexual behavior takes place. The following section of this chapter will explore the themes that capture the views about preparation for reproduction for the young Kikuyu women in this study: *eroded rite of passage, parental discomfort, negative messages and styles, closed parent-daughter communication, preparation for roles rather than effective relationships, uninvolved fathers, responsibility shift to school and church, inaccurate information*, and *uninformed peers.*

Eroded Rites of Passage

Traditionally, grandmothers and aunties were responsible for transmitting information regarding sexual norms and practices to young women in this socio-cultural context. Additionally, this information was transmitted during the rites of passage ceremonies, after which young Kikuyu women joined traditional support groups that further enhanced their learning about reproduction and sexuality. For women, the rite of passage not only involved the physical operation of circumcision, but included support and teaching by women's groups (Ahlberg, 1991). Circumcision for women is rarely practiced in Kenya today due to health, religious and other concerns about this aspect of the rite of passage. Unfortunately no other rite of passage or tradition associated with attaining physical maturity has taken the place of circumcision. The elimination of the physical practice has been accompanied by the elimination of the socialization part of the practice which included membership in a women's support group, increased inter-generational interaction and increased opportunities for discussion of women's sexuality concerns.

Two women in this sample reported that they had been circumcised. Their comments reflect the erosion of meaning and learning about sexuality or reproductive behavior associated with this rite.

> I was 13 years old when I was circumcised. At this time one is expected to become an adult. One is circumcised to become a sensible person (*agie hakiri*). I do not know what this means-because I don't think that I became more sensible than I was before I got circumcised.
>
> (Mw, 22 yrs, pki, 6 pri; school dropout, one child)

> Nothing changed. I stopped playing with small uncircumcised girls. The girls who are about 10 years of age; now I do not play with them. But I talk with circumcised women about circumcised males (*arume*). Like if there is a young man who talked to me, I share with the other young women who are circumcised about my discussions with the man.
>
> (Mt, 12 yrs, Pki,5 pri; in school, no child)

Parental Discomfort with New Roles

Traditionally parents were not the primary educators of their daughters about reproduction since that responsibility was carried out by aunties and grand mothers and later on through the rites of passage. Today new expectations for socializing young women about reproduction are placed on parents. This role is not a comfortable one. Parents expressed their discomfort with the role in the following vignettes:

> Parents all over suddenly are expected to perform roles that were not traditionally within their realm. They may be shy, inadequate or they may not have the knowledge to discuss these things or it may just be that cultural traditions are still hanging on us. It is still difficult for us to talk about these things with our children.
>
> (M, 42 yrs, Ski; community leader, parent)

> My wife would not venture into it herself and she is a teacher. She finds it most difficult to talk about reproduction. What we do is pass on books to our children and hope that they read and understand the contents. We say such things as 'This is a good book. It will help you to understand biology'. But you see this is a denial of reality; we tell our children to understand the subject matter and not themselves. We would not even want our children to imagine that we know about body physiology. We do not have the language to communicate to our children about such matters, and this is very critical for parents today.
>
> (M,46 yrs, Ski; community leader, parent)

> We do not do anything objective about it. We instead assume that they will learn it from somewhere. We may give some indications but not something systematic. In fact I think we give indirect indications. We use incidental counseling or what I may call, opportune time counseling. We are opportunists. I know I am guilty of that myself.
>
> (M, 46 yrs, Ski, community leader, parent)

> What I sometimes do is use indirect communication with her. I sometimes for instance get her some magazines to read. I usually

> get teens magazines that have topics on sex education. For example, I get 'Step magazine' or 'Children-Watoto magazine.' The content of these magazines may include safety in the homes or at school, growing up, bodily-physiological changes like menstruation, dating and such topics. 'Step Magazine is more of a religious magazine. I consider it to be more of a family magazine. There are other magazines like the 'Boy Meets Girl', or 'Girl Meets Boy'. I have not read these magazines myself. But I hear other parents discuss about them.
>
> (M, 45 yrs, Ski; a lecturer, parent)

One young woman who received menstrual information from her mother, received only part of the information.

> My mother now talks about periods with me. She has told me that from 12 years of age, I can have monthly periods. She told me monthly period is blood that a woman sees once every month. But she did not tell me why it happens. I do not know why it happens.
>
> (Mt, 12 yrs, Pki, 5 pri; in school, no child).

Negative Messages and Styles

The above noted discomfort often leads to a closed door approach to communication about sexuality. In addition, young women noted that their parents used a parental teaching style characterized more by threats and abusive reactions than by information or assurance. Young women also noted that their mothers took advantage of bad or undesirable situations to counsel them.

> My mother would not even discuss about simple things like periods with me. She beat me up when I came home from school and I had soiled my clothes with my periods because she suspected that I had engaged in sexual relations with a man.
>
> (Bb, 18 yrs, Pki, 4 sec; h. school dropout, no child)

> My mother talks to me about periods, pregnancy, sex before marriage especially when she notices a problem in the community. Like when she sees me with my friend that she does not think highly of or does not approve of her behavior; my mother talks about how there is little to gain from a poor friendship. She says

> bad influences would lead to premarital pregnancy. She uses this situation to lead to a discussion about sex.
>
> (Ml, 17 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; in school, no child)

Young women's perceptions were echoed by information shared by secondary key informants.

> I talk about premarital intercourse. I seek the opportunity to counsel her. I tell her she must maintain her respect (*gitiiyo*), by not sleeping with men before marriage. I tell her that once she becomes pregnant, he takes off from her, she will have no education and no man will want to marry a woman who already has a child. I tell her that if she gets a child now, she ceases to be a girl, she becomes a woman and experiences problems of women. It is child bearing that seems to be the demarcating line between childhood and adulthood these days, in place of circumcision rites
>
> (F, 39 yrs, Ski, parent)

> I tell my daughter that if she plays with boys, she would get a child. You know if you do not prepare them they would find out from their friends who might be their playmates or children who are older than they are or even overhear adults talking.
>
> (M, 42 yrs, Ski, lecturer)

Closed Mother-Daughter Communication

Such teaching styles of parents may contribute to the isolation and avoidance of communication about sexuality and other concerns between mother and daughter.

> Me, I don't tell anyone my problems. Me, I keep my problems to myself. I see I should not discuss my problems with my parents, like about many things that bother my heart (*maria mathinagia ngoro*), like those that hurt me (*ta maria manduraga*) or my relations with my friends. So I share my problems and my happiness (*mathina makwa na gikeno giakwa*) with my boyfriend (*na mwanake murata wakwa*).
>
> (Bb, 18 yrs, Pki, 4 yrs, h. school dropout, no child)

Preparation for Roles Rather than Effective Relationships

Young women did credit their mothers for preparing them for future family roles. Instruction, however, regarding these roles focused on the characteristics that are expected of a potential wife rather than how to develop or maintain a relationship. For example, mothers taught their daughters the expectations associated with being good wives. Good wives help their in-laws to perform tasks like fetching water or firewood, and are also obedient and respectful to their parents-in-law. This rule oriented education about roles is very similar to that which was provided to young Kikuyu girls in the past before they went through tribal education during rites of passage.

> My mother talks to me about family life, how to be a good wife,that I must respect my husband, and keep my children clean. She tells me about hygiene, how to feed my children a good diet, how to respect my parents of both sides and not to have many children. She tells me that I should have 3-4 years interval between births. She says that it is important to have few children in order to be able to feed, clothe, and buy school materials for them. My mother says that I should not have sex before marriage, and that I must complete school before marriage.
>
> (Ml, 17 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; in school, no child)

These young women indicated that this education for roles continues after marriage, but at this time it is provided by the husband.

> After marriage, the newly married man counsels his wife about marriage living. Sometimes women of similar age to the mother of the young man may counsel the newly married young woman about family life. But, I do not know what young men (new husbands) tell their wives. I also do not know what the women who counsel the newly married women tell them. I never heard anyone discuss such things. I only know that this is something that is done.
>
> (Mw 22 yrs, Pki, 6 pri; school dropout, one child)

Uninvolved Fathers

Young women did not consult their fathers about these matters. While their descriptions used the word "fear" their avoidance of talking with their fathers was probably related more to respect than actual fear.

> I fear my father--I think he would reply to my questions if I had any or had concerns, but I feel uncomfortable.
>
> (MI, 17 yrs, Pki; 2 sec; in school, no child)

> I grew up knowing that my father was the head of this house, so I fear him because of that.
>
> (MI, 17 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; in school no child)

> My husband works away from home and comes home during the weekends. My son says that he wants to stay away from his father because he complains about money all the time. He says that his father bothers him a lot with his complaints.
>
> (F, 48 yrs, Ski; one child)

Responsibility Shift to School and Church

Due to the ambivalence parents expressed about preparing their daughters for reproduction it is not surprising that a parental transfer of responsibility for socialization has occurred from family to the schools and churches. Unfortunately, educators and religious leaders are reluctant to receive the transfer of responsibility for sexuality education because of a widespread belief that such instructions would encourage young people, who would not have otherwise engaged in sexual intercourse, to do so (Muriuki, 1983). What emerges is an unstable and uncoordinated acceptance of responsibility by the home, school and church. In this gap of action by these three socialization groups, the peer group acquires powerful influence. Unfortunately,the peers are uninformed and inexperienced so their information is in many cases inaccurate. Issues raised about responsibility for sexuality education are reflected by the following examples.

> There is a reversal of roles in preparation of our children for reproduction. So the information is from school to the home and not vice versa. Parents feel inadequate to teach their children about reproduction. Uneducated parents especially feel that their children are more educated than them and so they do not even try to advise them about reproductive roles.
>
> (F, 55 yrs, Ski, one child)

> Parents also hope that the schools would do the magic of passing information on reproduction and sexuality. Like in Home Science classes, parents wish children will learn about forming relationships. I know very well myself as an educator that they (schools) are doing nothing about it, but I tend to ignore, I do not want to convince myself that I have a responsibility to discuss such issues with my children, or that nothing is done about these issues. In the schools they have so much material to cover, but some of this information, they would rather ignore.
>
> (M, 55 yrs, Ski, educator, parent)

Schools use an avoidance approach to sexuality education. The primary key informants noted that the topics covered in school include those which deal with fertilization and the development of the fetus. Teachers generally avoid detailed explanations about these concepts and prefer to draw graphic representations that students are expected to interpret on their own.

> In school, I found that my biology teachers drew pictures on the boards that they did not explain or just decided to say very little about. I remember learning more about plants than people.
>
> (Bb, 18 yrs, Pki, 4 yrs, h school dropout no child)

The church gives contradictory messages in its efforts. On the one hand, the church teaches about God's forgiveness and understanding, but in practice the church condemns young women who have children out of wedlock, and in some instances these women are excommunicated from the church for certain periods of time. The church has not developed activities for young people which encourage and enhance the development of male-female relationships. Young women who seek opportunities to openly interact with young men are labeled with derogatory terms. The insistence of the church officials on moral absolutes of right and wrong combined with the lack of opportunities for social interaction between young men and women within the church activities may partly explain the secret meetings held between young women and men. The following illustrates this double bind in which young women find themselves.

> Male female relations are not open because there is too much judging of people. It is not acceptable to have such relations. Religious parents are against male female relations because they say they think their children would be labeled as the 'cheap' ones and because they are suspicious of their daughters having sex with men. It is shameful to have open male female friendships. You hear people start to say, this one is consistently with men (*uyu atuuraga na arume)*, and it is shameful for us. That is why we have to meet secretly.
>
> (K, 16 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; dropout pregnant)

> Many times, young people arrange to see each other on Sundays They would go to church at 10.00 am, leave at 12.00 noon. Then a young woman can go to visit a young man's cube and get home at 5.00 pm. She would tell her parents that she had gone to visit her girlfriend after church service.
>
> (K, 16 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; dropout pregnant)

> I do not go to church since I had the baby, because I lost direction (*nindahitirie njira*). I must go back to church. I would like my baby to be baptized.
>
> (N, 18 yrs, Pki, 6 pri; one child)

> There are also cases of young men who join the church in order to marry certain girls who are said to be saved. When young men and

> women declare they are saved they can freely visit each other because they are trusted in the church. This goes on until that 'saved girl' (*muhonoki ucio)* gets pregnant, then the church sends both of them away (*makaingatwo*).
>
> (Mw, 22 yrs, 6 pri; dropout one child)

Uninformed Peers

There are differences in views and in the concerns expressed about reproduction and sexuality among young women, between men and women, and between young women and their mothers. Fathers were described as being respected as the heads of families and therefore matters concerning reproduction were not shared with them. Respect in this culture is portrayed by avoidance of discussion of topics related to sexuality with parents, especially with fathers. The role of peers in this community was extensive. The following examples are illustrative of the manner in which peers are involved in preparation for reproduction.

> With my auntie or my girlfriends who are my age mates,we discuss about periods, or our boy friends and such. We discuss how to have harmonious discussions with parents, how to live with my in-laws when I do finally get married, how to keep the relationship with my husband good.
>
> (K, 16 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; dropout pregnant)

> My auntie says that I can have a happy home by helping my in-laws with tasks such as fetching water, collecting firewood and being obedient to them. She tell me how to live with my husband, that I should respect him and my in-laws, and if my in-laws tell me of my mistakes, that I should mend my ways.
>
> (K 16 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; dropout pregnant)

> My friends say that if a girl sleeps with a man and she has already started seeing the monthly period, that she would get pregnant.
>
> (Mt, 12 yrs,Pki, 5 pri; in school no child)

> We discuss about diseases that are transmitted through sex (*mirimu iria igwatanagio na sex*) like AIDS, gonorrhoea and syphilis with my boyfriend.
>
> (MI,17 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; in school no child)

> We hold discussions about school work, sexual relations, fear of pregnancy, plans for marriage, fear of sexually associated diseases like AIDS, and gonorrhea.
>
> (Bb, 18 yrs, Pki, 4 yrs, h school dropout no child)

These examples note the varied content of the discussions about reproduction for different groups. The discussions held among young women focused on pregnancy prevention, expected behavior in marriage such as respecting and pleasing her husband and the in-laws, as well as how she might correct inappropriate behavior. Young men and women discussed prevention of pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and school work, while the discussions held with mothers were focused more on the characteristics of a potential wife and relationships with in-laws.

Inaccurate Information

The information from peers is often inaccurate or incomplete. For example, young women mentioned counseling of the newly weds but were not aware of the content of discussions, or mentioned contraception but did not have accurate information about it.

> Unfortunately, we do not seem to realize the influence young people have on each other. They read about these things and go and discuss the issues that they feel are important. Whether they get the right messages or not we do not find out from them.
>
> (M, 46 yrs, Ski, educator, parent)

The following account from one of the key informants illustrates the incompleteness of the information young women may have on pregnancy prevention. For example, while the calculation of the fertile period by this key informant is surprisingly accurate, use of this calculation as an absolute is not practical or safe for women with irregular periods. No mention was made about charting of this key informant's menstrual cycle to determine the longest and shortest cycles in order to determine her expected fertile period (Strong & DeVault, 1988).

> I would use safe days after periods. Let's say I had my periods between August 23-25. From 26th August to September 1 (7 days), those are safe days to not get pregnant. From September 2nd to 8th September, I am not safe. From the 9th of Sept until the time that I start having my next period, I am safe to have sexual intercourse.
>
> (K, 16 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; dropout pregnant)

> AIDS is a disease associated with adultery. This means that when a man has sexual intercourse with a woman who is not his wife or a woman with a man who is not her husband; someone that a person has no knowledge of, the husband or wife can contract AIDS.
>
> (Ml, 17 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; in school no child)

> They say they would die or develop high blood pressure. They refuse to go for family planning because there is still a widespread belief that family planning pills are the same pills that are given to dogs to control birth; that once a woman stops taking them, she bleeds to death.
>
> (Mw, 22 yrs, Pki, 6 pri; dropout one child)

Summary

The above discussion clearly shows that Kikuyu parents in the transrural setting have much difficulty discussing reproduction and sexuality with their daughters. This discomfort may be related to the traditional norms that delegated this responsibility to the grandparents and aunties. Parents may also be reluctant to discuss reproduction because of feelings of inadequacy and lack of skills. These narratives also suggest that parents may particularly shield their daughters from receiving even the basic facts about their sexuality because of a belief that if they did not have such knowledge, they would not engage in sexual intercourse outside of marriage. Parents, because of their ambivalence towards discussing reproduction, appear to be dogmatic, yet less sure of themselves; and more fearful yet less able to communicate their fears effectively. Using these closed communication methods they are attempting to be protective of their children, yet actually achieve less power to influence their children's sexual behavior.

Kenya shares similar concerns with western cultures regarding this dogmatic approach to the sexuality of young people. Thus young women's narratives about their perceptions regarding preparation for reproduction clearly present a picture of an uninformed young woman about reproductive roles, relationship development and preparation for family formation. Open communication on matters related to sexuality still remains outside the realm of parental jurisdiction. Other socialization agents are also ineffective. The teachers also feel uncomfortable or are ill equipped to teach the concepts related to sexuality. The peers, who are evidently influential in the discussions on reproductive behavior, are also uninformed. For example, peer information about contraceptive pills is pervasive with myths about the pill's side effects. These myths include beliefs that use of the pill causes infertility, deaths, and extreme loss of weight. Information shared by young women in this study on safe periods also illustrates the magnitude of the inaccuracy of the information that young women have.

The church gives double messages regarding preparation for reproduction. On the one hand, the church condemns child bearing out of wedlock but did not appear to encourage the development of non-sexual male-female relationships through public activities. Partly due to the stigma attached to those who seek to have open interaction with males, young women chose to have secretive relations with males. This secretive pattern allows circumstances for an accelerated pattern of sexual relations prior to the development of other aspects of the relationship.

Reports of recent studies conducted in Kenya (Ajayi, Marangu, Miller & Paxman, 1991; Barker, & Rich, 1991) support this description that young people do not discuss sexuality with their parents or family members. Peers were reported to be the major sources of information. Ajayi, Marangu, Miller and Paxman (1991) suggest that serious questions must be raised about the accuracy of the information that young people have on reproduction. These suggestions are not surprising given the nature of information gathered in the present study. For example, the information on the pill is a distorted piece of information. Given the nature of peer influence on young women, issues regarding dissemination of correct information to them is crucial for Kenya.

The Development and Evolution of Relationships

The activities that characterized perspectives about the development of relationships were captured by seven prevalent themes observed in the interviews: *Male Dominant Model, Secret Cube Experiences, Absence of Voice, Differential Hers and His Views, Ambiguous Observations, Short Circuited Exploration Opportunities of Partners,* and *Living, Discovering and Confronting a Lie.*

The meeting places and the process of forming male/female relationships are influenced by the youth network and precludes to a large degree the kin network. This new approach to forming relationships between males and females is a change in the traditional involvement of kin and the open system that operated in the past. The following will be a description of the rules that govern relationship development as perceived by young Kikuyu women in their social setting. These will include how the relationship evolves and progresses and the expectations of males and females in this development.

Male Dominance

These young women suggested that a man must initiate interaction with women and subsequently shape the pattern of the relationship development process. He must make the first step because it is not proper for women to do so. Arrangements for the meeting places and selection of the activities are made by a young man. A young woman must follow his lead in order to maintain her integrity as a 'proper woman'.

A general pattern in the initial stages of seeking to establish a relationship includes a young man's probing about a young woman's identity and her background.

> They may first meet in the bus, roadside or bus stop. The young man first greets the woman, then he starts (*ambagiriria*) by asking a girl her name and where she comes from. Then tells her that he wants her (*nindira-kwenda*). He arranges for other meetings and a suitable place to meet.
>
> (Mw, 22 yrs,Pki, 6 pri; one child)

Early in the initial meetings, the young man seeks information about the young woman's relationship with other males.

> He starts by asking her about her other male friends. He tells her that he is not interested in exploiting her, that he would like to marry her. He tells her this so that she is not stolen (*nigetha ndakae kuiywo*) by other men.
>
> (Mw, 22 yrs, Pki 6 pri; one child)

Secret Cube Experiences

The male rite of passage includes increased interacting with other males and the expectation that he would move to a cube, which is a small, separate room from the main family living quarters. One of his new responsibilities as an adult male is to make independent decisions without consultation with his parents.

The private cube accords him privacy and a sense of freedom as he begins to prepare to establish his own home. In a focus discussion with young males, one participant who seemed to dominate the discussion had the following to say about the cube experience:

> Even our parents know of our physical needs and that is one of the reasons they build cubes for us. But we also believe that there is the right woman with a good foundation some place (*njuguma njega yuumaga ikuuriro*). There are some women to push time with while waiting for the right one.
>
> (M, 24 yrs, Ski, potential partner).

Relationships between young men and women are secret in nature because of the strict codes of behavior set out by young women's parents and church authorities. One way of dealing with this perceived restriction is by visiting the young males cubes secretly. Arrangements for dates, time and frequency of the meetings are made by the male. Young women must wait for the invitations from young men, because as a general rule, males can invite many women to visit their cubes and young women must strive to maintain their proper place as ideal women.

One young woman narrated how she sneaked out from her parents' home to go and spend nights with her boyfriend. She said that she took turns to sneak out with her two sisters, one sixteen and the other seventeen years of age.

> My parents have never known that I am gone overnight. For me, I am home by 6:00 a.m. At that time, it is dark so no one can recognize me on the way home.
>
> (Bb, 18 yrs, Pki, 4 yrs, h school dropout no child)

> I used to go to his parents' home but I used to pretend that I was visiting his sister. In the evenings I would return secretly to visit him in his cube.
>
> (Mu, 24 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; drop out one child)

> I met him after I returned from training. Before long I was pregnant. My parents did not know that I was seeing a man. I had kept it a secret because my mother had been very unhappy with my older sister when she had a baby. My mother said that my sister had shamed (*niaconorithirie*) our family especially in the eyes of our church (*na muno maithoini ma kanitha iitu).*
>
> (W, 24 yrs, Pki, 4 sec; one child)

> A young man cannot show his parents that he is dating; it is secretive. He takes the young woman to his cube that is built for him by his parents. A young man gets this cube built for him when he is about 15-18 years of age. This is because parents cannot satisfy a young man's needs. For example, a young man needs to date, he cannot do it in his parents' house, and he also needs to meet with other young men, and talk about their experiences or what they would want to do in future, like their plans for marriage.
>
> (N, 18 yrs, Pki; 6 pri; one child)

When it was not possible to meet at night, young males and females arranged to meet on Sundays after church service. Sundays were suitable days in which to meet especially for those people who went to church because parents were less suspicious of secret meetings than on other days. It was also the day that parents themselves were free to go and visit with others in their community.

> Most of the time, young people would arrange to see each other on Sundays. They would go to church at 10:00 a.m. and leave at 12:00 noon. Then a young woman can go and visit a young man in his cube and arrive at home at 5:00 p.m. She would tell her parents that she had gone to visit with her girlfriend.
>
> (Mw, 22 yrs, Pki,6 pri; dropout one child)

> This relationship was a secret, completely unknown to us. She told me that she was going to spend a night at her friend's house so that she could accompany her to the clinic the following morning. She came the following day in our absence and stole her clothes in a suit case. The mother of the young man she has gone to live with came the following night with other women and woke me up. They asked me whether any of my daughters were missing from home. I told them to come the following day in daylight (*kuri muthenya*), so they could speak to the owner of the home (*mwene mucii*). That is the way she got married and she had just completed Form Four. Our friend was going to take her for further training. She got married to a Standard seven man.
>
> (F, 44 yrs, Ski, homemaker one child)

> Young women cannot afford to tell their parents the truth--because it is shameful (*ni uura thoni*) and due to fear of being physically abused.
>
> (Mw, 22 yrs, Pki 6 pri; one child)

> My parents allow me to do homework with young men but only if those young men are not my boy friends. If they discover that we have such a relationship, they would not allow it. But all the same we do homework in my home so that my parents are sure to supervise us. They do not know that one of those young men is my boyfriend.
>
> (Ml, 17 yrs Pki, 2 sec; in school)

Absence of Voice

According to the Kikuyu culture, it is men who marry women and therefore men should set the stage for the development and the process of the relationship. A proper woman conforms to what is expected of her. Conformity provides some sense of order and predictability of the meaning the relationship might assume in future. The following capture the perceptions of young women regarding relationship development and the roles that they perceived to be playing in these relationships.

> Young women have no words to ask men to be their boy friends. I do not think that a woman who would ask a man to befriend her would be thought of as a proper woman according to our traditions (*kuringana na mitugo iitu*). If a woman asks a man to befriend her, it is a must (*no muhaka)* that she would be thought of as a woman who is not proper and loose in her morals (*kihunguiyu)*.
>
> (Ml,17 yrs, Pki,2 sec;school dropout one child)
>
> Men dictate whether or not to have children. If I try not to have children, he would take off from me. If I try to discuss anything with him, he may abuse me, say that I am stupid and that my ideas do not matter. The men that I know of here, do not ask women to make any decision.
>
> (Mw, 22 yrs, Pki, 6 pri; one child)

Confirming the nature of the control a young man has in the development of a relationship with a young woman, one key informant narrated that once a young man arranges to meet with a woman and she agrees to such a meeting and subsequent others, then he has total control of what happens in that relationship.

> They may be born in the same community, may be educated together in the same school, maybe a friend from the community introduces you to a young woman with whom you can arrange to meet. From then on you have control of the situation. This means that socially it is accepted that it is a man who must lead in the

> process of knowing each other. A young man has enough time to decide and to think through whether it is all right or not to marry a particular young woman.
>
> (M, 45 yrs, Ski, a teacher)

Young Kikuyu women narrated that they would engage in kissing and hugging with their boyfriends. They believed that they did not have bargaining power in what happened when they visited young males' cubes. The following examples illustrate how young women perceived their interactions with males as impersonal outsiders looking in on their life experiences.

> When a woman visits a young man's cube, she knows exactly what would be done to her.
>
> (Mw, 22 yrs, Pki, 6 pri; one child)

> It is very rare for a young man to leave a woman alone once she has entered the cube. I don't know how men experience sexual intercourse because they must have it at all costs. This is true even among those who claim to be saved among us. Like when I attend youth prayer meetings like *Kesha*, sleep overnight in a church building. Young men and women walk out of the church in the darkness for lengthy periods. We also know of saved young women who become pregnant in our community. Is this not good enough evidence? They must not be telling us the truth.
>
> (Mw, 22 yrs, Pki, 6 pri; one child)

Young women observe the behavior of young men while living in the cube, but they expressed a lack of power in determining the outcome of their relationships. The following examples illustrate this point.

> It could even take as long as 3 months. We would be living as husband and wife. If I like his mannerisms, I can have sexual intercourse with him because I have already agreed to go and live with him.
>
> (Bb, 18 yrs, Pki, 4 sec; h school. dropout no child)

> A woman can observe the behavior of a young man and like him, but if he does not ask her to be his wife, then she cannot do anything about it.
>
> (MI, 17 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; no child)

Differential Hers and His Views

The secret move of a young woman to a young man's cube appeared to be viewed differently by women and men. Young women perceived the request made of them by young males to move into their cubes as a stage towards 'formalizing' their marriage. They perceived this request to demonstrate a young male's commitment to a young woman. During this 'trial marriage', a young man was expected to take on the role of a husband. Some of his responsibilities included provision of foodstuffs and he was expected to eat the food the young woman cooked for him. She, in turn, was expected to prove her suitability as a potential wife by cooking good food, cleaning the house, and washing his clothes. She discerned whether the young man felt she was a potential wife by observing his reactions when she served him food. If he ate the food prepared by her, this was perceived to be an indication that he appreciated her cooking and liked her. But if he ate out often, this would have been an indication that he was spending time with other women. She could also find out if he cared enough for her to become his potential wife by determining how well he agreed to her demands, for example, by buying pieces of furniture that she requested. If he spent time with other women, or did not agree to her demands, this was taken to mean that he did not consider the young woman as his potential wife.

> If the young man buys food, does not go out to eat in hotels, and likes her cooking, if he does not bring other women home to make her unhappy, and she is happy to live with him, if these things take place, the young woman knows she is the wife of the young man.
>
> (K, 16 yrs, Pki, dropout pregnant)

> If a young man buys the young woman gifts, takes her to his home, allows her to do some work on the family plot and to join his brothers and sisters in this chore. These are good signs that the young man wants to marry a young woman. If a young man also meets the demands of a young woman. For example, smart girls make demands on young men such as if there are no chairs or a table in the young man's cube, the young woman asks the young man to buy them. If he meets these demands, then the young woman realizes that the young man cares for her and wants to marry her. And that marriage is very near.
>
> (Mw, 22 yrs, Pki, 6 pri; one child)

> I would not agree to sleep with him if he takes *bhang* (dope), or takes alcohol, or does not fear God or if he believes in witchcraft (*mithaiga*), or he is a rude person as I can gauge from his talk.
>
> (K, 16 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; dropout pregnant)

Young men's views of the cube experience were less marriage oriented. In many instances it is not clear whether young men were choosing a temporary sexual partner, rather than a permanent life partner. By virtue of their initiation, males are allowed to act in certain ways such as inviting many young women to spend nights with them in their cubes. One young man, speaking of his experiences and societal expectations, narrated:

> Even our parents know of our physical needs and that is one of the reasons they build cubes for us. But we also believe that there is the right woman with a good foundation some place (*njuguma njega yuumaga ikuuriro*). There are some women to push time with while waiting for the right one.
>
> (M, 24 yrs, Ski, potential partner)

Thus, young males had different reasons for keeping their relationships with women secretive. Young men may have held different expectations in their relationships with young women because they still needed approval from their parents for their choice of a permanent partner.

> We must hide them from our parents because some of them are for a bad night (*ni aa utuku muuru*). We believe that people will pair according to God's wishes. That is the young women who spend the nights in our cubes, leave before the sun sets. That way, our parents can not see them. We have to be respectful to our parents.
>
> (M, 24 yrs, Ski, potential partner)

Mothers of young men are influential in the choice of partners their sons eventually permanently live with. Sons involve their mothers after the trial marriages leads them to make a tentative decision about a wife. Such trial cube experiences could last for up to a period of three months.

> They observe the young woman's behavior because other than being their son's wife, she is also expected to be the parents' helper. So she must obey their rules; she now belongs to their family. The parents observe how the young woman welcomes guests, whether she makes good tea for them, how she washes dishes, ploughs the land, cooks, and they listen to the tone of voice she uses to communicate with the parents.
>
> (MI; 17 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; no child)

> In many cases a young woman talks to her mother-in-law. The mother-in-law is the one who issues out orders. If she is not happy with the young woman's behavior, she notifies her son. But a young man never tells the young woman that his parents have rejected her. It is his actions that are revealing of such a decision. A young man may start mistreating a young woman. For example, he may decide not to buy bathing soap for her; he may start sleeping out; he may refuse to eat the food that she cooks. These actions (*ciiko*) are meant to indicate her position (status) in the home.
>
> (N, 18 yrs, Pki, 6 pri; one child)

Ambiguous Observations

The type of observations that young women suggested they made of their male partners when living in the cubes were focused on his material possessions rather than the interpersonal dimensions and emotional indicators of the intimacy between the young man and young woman. The decisions made to seal the marriages were also unclear because they did not appear to involve the parents or other members of the community until after the couple had lived together for some time. In the past, the initial engagement was not a secret and the sealing of the engagement among the Kikuyu people was a public announcement and function that involved kin from both the man's and woman's side. Now arrangements made for marriage involve the young man and woman and only later are parents of the young man notified that their son got married.

> In this community, I would say that it is only twenty-five young people or less, out of one hundred who involve their parents in the decisions to get married or even in marriage. I know this number may even be much lower. Those who involve their parents are the ones who come from Christian homes. Sometimes, if the young man's family is not Christian and the young woman's family is, then the woman may have to go through the unplanned marriages of crossing over (*gukira*) to the other side. People used to call those marriages, the wedding of the maize plantation (*uhiki wa mabebeini*).
>
> (F, 48 yrs, Ski, community leader)

> These days young people seem to get ideas about marriage and relationships from other young people. But young people cannot counsel each other because they do not know their ways. They have no direction themselves. However, what happens is that the young people return home to their parents after they have already made their mistakes; mistakes that cannot be erased. They do things like marrying someone from within the same clan or people they should not get involved with. So young people are counselled after the mistakes have already been made because there is no counselling that used to be done within the families or within the age groupings, like after circumcision.
>
> (M, 45 yrs, Ski, a teacher)

Short Circuited Exploration Opportunities of Partners

Young women described limited informal contact with young men because of parental fear and the stigma that is attached to open relationships between young men and women in their communities . If they had open relationships they were perceived to be loose girls.

Male and female relationships and the sexuality of young people were not regarded as normal and healthy within the communities. Therefore there is limited teaching of how to handle sexual feelings and how to express them within normal daily interactions. Because of the pressure young women experience from their parents and other members of their communities to confirm to the image of a "good woman", they chose to have their relations with males secretly. These relations are particularly short circuited in that they are intermittent, precipitate early sexual involvement and occur without guidelines from the adult population.

> I would like to make other decisions like on things we could do together, but we are not very free to meet because of the restrictions from my parents.
>
> (MI, 17 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; no child)

> Young women cannot afford to tell their parents the truth-- because it is shameful (*ni uura thoni*) and due to fear of being physically abused.
>
> (Mw, 22 yrs, Pki, 6 pri; one child)

> After we finish homework, he is allowed to escort me home. We walk and talk and discuss about ourselves. His parents do not restrict him as my parents restrict me.
>
> (MI, 17 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; no child)

> I was having my relations secretly because my parents and especially my mother were against me having relations with men.
>
> (W, 24 yrs, Pki, 4 sec; no child)

> There are no opportunities for young men and women here. It was only the newly circumcised young men and women who used to

> have organized activities; these days it is not common to hear about them. But I hear about Church youth groups. I do not know what they do.
>
> (Mw, 22 yrs, Pki, one child)

Living, Discovering and Confronting a Lie

Young women narrated how they spent a significant amount of time with young men without the supervision of the young men's parents. Additionally when young men asked the women to move into their cubes, young women moved from their homes secretly. In many cases they did not notify their parents of their whereabouts or what their plans were. When things did not work out and they were turned down as potential wives, they returned home to their estranged parents and found it difficult to reveal the truth to them.

> *Muiritu* (a young woman), must know how she will come back home and lie to her parents. Like now (*tariu*), a young woman can lie that she had gone to visit her girlfriend or maybe she went searching for work and was told to wait for the reply, so she can tell her parents that she had been living with her girlfriend for the three months that she had been away.
>
> (Bb, 18 yrs, Pki, 4 sec; h school dropout no child)

Summary

Young women were placed in precarious situations in which young men asked them to move in with them secretly, and live intimately without a formal commitment. When relationships were terminated young women had to discern, or in some cases rely on the indirect information they received from their mothers-in-law to determine what went wrong. Confronting the lie that they had lived for many months became a painful experience especially when they returned to their parents' homes, often pregnant and disgraced.

Young women in this social context were more likely to be chosen than to choose life partners. Young women expressed that while they observed the behavior of young men to determine their suitability as potential husbands, they had little bargaining power in making the choice of a partner because the males made the final decision of whom to marry and when to do so. Thus the trial marriage situation proved to be a lie from the perspectives of young women because they could not choose life partners.

Reproductive Behavior in Context

The reproductive behavior of young women in the research context was influenced by traditional beliefs about the role of a woman and by beliefs that were related to the prevailing socioeconomic realities of the day. Aspects of reproductive behavior were captured by the following themes: *Marriage as Enslavement, Children a Cultural Must, Fertility as Proof of Manhood, Children as Freedom, Meeting the Naming Norms, Family Planning Evils, The Pill as Freedom To Rather than Freedom From.*

Marriage as Enslavement

This theme in the interviews was not surprising given the previous examples of the lack of women's power in choosing life partners and in making reproductive decisions. For many young women, marriage was not positively viewed. Young women suggested marriage was negative because of what they observed in other women's marital relationships.

Young women described marriage as a life of subservience in which a woman lost her control of her life. Husbands were perceived to make decisions that went unchallenged. Wives simply went along with those decisions. This theme, though not particularly surprising given the nature of the unbalanced relationships between young men and women, is paradoxical. Women actively pursued the secret cube experiences and expressed an expectation of a permanent relationship, while acknowledging the potentially constraining aspects of marriage. Thus marriage was both desired and despised. This may be because young women were striving to get married as a cultural expectation, but looked upon the marital situation as one that devalued their feelings and contributions to the relationship.

> Before marriage, the young man and young woman discuss about their future plans, about how they will get married. But after marriage, the young woman loses her rights to discuss about what happens in their marriage.I think there are too many problems in marriage.
>
> (Mw, 22 yrs, Pki, 6 pri; one child)

> For me if a young man discusses about marriage, I just stare at him. Once married, a young woman loses her say. The husband dominates her *(agaikarirwo biu ni muthuri)*. She has to be submissive (*no muhaka etikanie na uria muthuri oiga*). Many husbands discourage their wives from working because they would like to be the main breadwinner. That way they can have control over the woman. They insist that they want to have many children. Then they leave you for other young women (*magacoka magagutiga magathii kwi dogo dogo*).
>
> (Bb, 18 yrs, Pki, 4 sec; h school dropout no child)

The lack of women's influence in their relationships was noteworthy. Husbands were perceived to have total control over their wives in marriage.

> Husbands are evil thinkers, because they do evil things (*athuuri meciiragia maundu moru muno tondu nao noguo meekaga*). Like now, a wife cannot have social relations outside of the marriage because husbands are suspicious of their wives.
>
> (Bb, 18 yrs, Pki, 4 yrs, h school dropout no child)

> You know, its only if God blesses you with the right man that you can find a good man. A man can pretend to be very good until you marry him and then you start wondering whether this is the same

> man you used to know. There is no possibility of knowing the qualities of a potential husband.
>
> (N, 18 yrs, Pki, 6 pri; one child)

Children a Cultural Must

Young women described the importance of having children. The key reason offered was that it was expected culturally that all people should have children as a source of status and identity. This was true whether children were born within or outside of marriage.

> I think that all our Kikuyu men and maybe all African men want their wives to have children. The in-laws also expect the same of young married people.
>
> (W, 24 yrs, Pki, 4 sec; one child)

> I know there are homes without children, but those are not good families because a man and a woman only get married to have children. Married people must also have children so that they can inherit their wealth.
>
> (K, 16 yrs, Pki; 2 sec; dropout pregnant)

> You know, one would want to become (*mundu*) a human being, that is why once a person becomes of age, they must want to have a child and must have one. There is that need to have a child even if a woman is not married.
>
> (N, 18 yrs, Pki; 6 pri; one child)

Fertility as Proof of Manhood

Both young men and woman believed that it was necessary to"prove"fertility before marriage. Once proved, through a premarital pregnancy, there was no guarantee that the young man would marry the woman. The following examples from an interview with a young male suggests that making a woman pregnant was merely a means of achieving his own personal acknowledgment of virility. No concern was expressed about the future of the mother or child.

> I think that a man must prove to himself that he can make a woman pregnant. Any other man must feel unsure of himself if he has no such proof; for me I had to prove to myself that I can do so right after my circumcision. I was 15 years old. Now I know that I am a man because I have already been able to father a child.
>
> (M, 18 yrs, Ski; a parent)

In turn, young women expressed fear that men would not propose marriage if they could not prove their fertility before marriage.

> I hear men say that they would not marry a woman who cannot have children. So I may have to prove to him that I can get pregnant, even before marriage.
>
> (Mu, 24 yrs, Pki; 2 sec ; one child)

> So maybe if I do not prove I can get pregnant, I may lose even more chances with other men.
>
> (Bb, 18 yrs, Pki, 4 yrs. h school. dropout no child)

Children as Freedom

Child bearing outside of marriage was perceived by some women to offer them freedom from getting married and a life of subservience in that relationship. The previous examples support the view that women felt great pressure to prove their fertility through a premarital pregnancy, and could not expect the father to commit himself to a permanent relationship. For some women, child bearing under these circumstance, offered them an escape from the subservience of marriage. It was apparently important to them to have a child, undoubtedly to meet cultural expectations. On the other hand, the possibility of employment and changed attitudes toward employment for women did not make marriage a necessity.

> If I get one child before I get married, I would not even think about getting married because of the problems I told you about. I would consider having a child outside of marriage because in a marriage situation I would not be allowed to make any decision in the home. I will have no freedom of saying what I want to say because I am a wife. I would have moved from my home, where I have no freedom to another one which is similar. Why would I want to get myself in the same problem? If I have a child, I can be employed, rent my own room, and have freedom.
>
> (K, 16 yrs, Pki; 2 sec; pregnant)

> If I was working and earning my own money, then I would be able to support my child. I could decide to move out of home and live on my own, that is if I do not get married, or just live at home and work and support my child.
>
> (Bb, 18 yrs, Pki, 4 yrs, h school dropout no child)

Male Control and Naming Norms

In marriage, men dictate whether or not to have children and the size of the family. The naming criteria (naming one child after each parent) must be met before consideration of the final size of the family is made, therefore most families cannot have less than four children. Other concerns may dictate the size of the family. These include sex ratio and whether a husband was an only child in his family. If he was an only child, it is likely he would desire more children because only children are viewed as lonely children.

> Men dictate whether or not to have children. If I try not to have children, he would take off from me. If I try to discuss anything with him, he may abuse me, say that I am stupid and that my ideas do not matter. The men that I know of here, do not ask women to make any decision.
>
> (Mw, 22 yrs, Pki, 6 pri; one child)

I think that it is my husband who would make that decision. I know it is a must that he would want us to name his father and mother and I would want the same for myself. For him especially, I know that he would want us to name his parents especially now that they are both dead. He was the last child in his family and I know that his mother meant so much to him. He would also want to maintain the family name.

(W, 24 yrs, Pki, 4 sec; one child)

I know I am going to have no less than 4. That will also be based on the number of girls and boys. If I have 3 more girls I do not know how he would feel about not naming his father. This might create problems for me but I am hoping that I am going to have two boys and one girl.

(W, 24 yrs, Pki, 4 sec; one child)

I would want four because we both want to name our families.

(N, 18 yrs, Pki, 6 pri; one child)

Even unmarried women especially in this community have at least 5-6 children. They can not even clothe themselves because their salaries are too little.

(Mw, 22 yrs, Pki, 6 pri; one child)

I think I would not want more than 5 children. But you know that depends on husbands and the sex of the children. Like I know all men would like to name their fathers so that they can keep the family name. I know I would also like to name my father and mother. There are also cases in which a man may have been an only child. Such a man would not want to hear about family planning because he was a lonely child when he was growing up. So he would want to have many children, sometimes 10 children.

(MI, 17 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; no child)

If I could be asked, I would plan and have only up to 5 children. But I do not think that a married woman makes a choice in the number of children that she finally has. I know my mother tells me not to have too many children, but I do not think that she has any say about it in our family. I think my father as the head (*mutongoria*) of this family makes that decision.

MI, 17 yrs, Pki; 2 sec; no child)

> Most men in Kenya like to have many children. It earns them respect especially when they can educate their children. But I think my father may not think so much about the respect he might be able to earn by having a large family. He is a teacher so he knows about the high school fees and I know he struggles hard to pay for mine and my sister's fees. But I still think he would be the one to decide on the family size and not so much my mother.
>
> (MI, 17 yrs, Pki, 2 sec, no child)

Family Planning Evils

Young women had ambivalent feelings about family planning. On the one hand, they echoed the need to control fertility, and on the other, they were fearful of the perceived side effects of the pill such as loss of life, fertility or health and the negative attitudes of males towards family planning. They stated that how women in the community had strained relations with their husbands because of their choice to use contraceptives.

> Some women say that family planning pills (*ndawa cia family)* can make a woman infertile (*no itume mutumia athaate*). Others say that they cause people to bleed to death. I know of one of my friends who became very thin. I am afraid of such things.
>
> (Bb, 18 yrs, Pki, 4 yrs, h school dropout no child)

> Me I do not even go to 'family planning.' They might talk me into using them and then I get problems. I only have one child, I cannot put myself into such a problem.
>
> (Mu, 24 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; one child)

> Some married women do not accept family planning. They say they would die or develop high blood pressure. The nurses come to our community and talk to us about family planning, but women refuse. They refuse to go for family planning until they have about 6 children when the rearing of children becomes too difficult for them. But a lot of people still believe that family planning pills

> are the same pills that are given to dogs to control birth. They say that once a woman stops taking them, she bleeds to death.
>
> (Mw, 22 yrs, Pki, 6 pri; one child)

The Pill as Freedom to Rather than Freedom From

Young women expressed their fear of using contraceptives, even in marriage, because husbands considered contraception to provide married women with freedom *to* have extra-marital relations rather than freedom *from* unwanted pregnancies. Thus the pill was considered to have both an internal and an external influence on marital relations. Married women who used contraceptives were considered morally loose, because of the belief that they had other ulterior motives behind the use of contraception.

> I know of some mothers who get into trouble with their husbands because their husbands believe that once women start using family planning, then they can become loose and have sex with other men. This I know is a fear of many men.
>
> (N, 18 yrs, Pki, 6 pri, one child)

The Avoided Topics

Abortion

Abortion was not discussed by the young women in the study. This is not surprising given the fact abortion is a criminal offence in Kenya. Secondary key informants however expressed their concern about the procurement of abortions by young women and the health hazards caused by such practices.

> We do not hear much about abortions here, but then they are secretive because abortion is a criminal offence.Young women are helped by their boyfriends to secure them. This happens more in relations which the men are much older than the girls, like sugar daddies who have money and the knowledge of primitive means of procuring abortions. Sometimes the men get prescriptions from doctors, buy the medications and take them to the young women to

> ingest. The men leave the young women to suffer the consequences. Older men do this to protect their reputation while the young women sometimes die from these induced abortions.
>
> (M, 47 yrs, Ski, community leader a parent)

Secondary informants explained that it was daughters of people with few resources who suffered the consequences of pregnancy and abortions more than those whose parents had the resources.

> The poor have no access to Family Planning or abortion services. The well to do have the resources and so are not caught up in situations that they do not desire to be in. But the poor are caught up and this changes their life course.
>
> (M, 45 yrs, Ski, an educator)

> Doctors take part in these clandestine abortions and charge high fees for their services. It is only people with money who can afford these abortions.
>
> (M, 47, Ski, community leader a parent)

AIDS

Young women did acknowledge the reality of sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS, but little was shared about methods of prevention. One woman raised concern about the loss of life and fertility that may be caused by diseases such as AIDS, gonorrhea and syphilis.

> From what I hear from the radio messages and my teachers, diseases such as AIDS can cause death. If a woman does not die from some of these diseases, the diseases destroy her eggs so she is unable to bear children.
>
> (MI, 17 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; no child)
>
> Two others described discussions with peers about AIDS.

> We discuss about diseases that are transmitted through sex (*mirimu iria igwatanagio na sex*) like AIDS, gonorrhoea and

> syphilis with my boyfriend.
>
> (MI,17 yrs, Pki, 2 sec; in school no child)

> We hold discussions about school work, sexual relations, fear of pregnancy, plans for marriage, fear of sexually associated diseases like AIDS, and gonorrhea.
>
> (Bb, 18 yrs, Pki, 4 yrs, h school dropout no child)

Concern about limiting sexual relations with multiple sexual partners and adopting preventive health practices was not brought up. However the issue of use of prophylactics was raised. One male secondary informant stated that most men were not willing to wear prophylactics because they were perceived to interfere with male manhood and to remove the joy of sex.

> Why would a man wear a condom?. That is not having sex. I would rather do without sex. Now that we know there is 'slim' (AIDS), then we have to be careful but for me condoms are an insult to my manhood.
>
> (M, 25 yrs, Ski, no child)

Summary

This chapter has presented the narratives regarding reproductive behavior as perceived by nine young Kikuyu women in transrural Kenya. Views of secondary informants (young men, parents, educators) were shared to support and clarify women's views. These narratives reveal important information about the social context within which young women make decisions regarding reproductive behavior. Some of the influences on this behavior are related to the traditional culture of the Kikuyu people while others have their roots in the changing cultural context.

A key element in these descriptions is the lack of the socialization of young women regarding reproductive behavior. Traditionally, sexuality education was comprehensive, systematic and an on-going process which was interwoven within the rubric of the daily activities of the Kikuyu people. This education was incorporated in religion, and traditional activities such as circumcision rituals and dances (Kenyatta, 1938, CSA, 1992). Thus, sexuality was viewed as a normal healthy development of each individual in society. Young people as well as other members of the community were provided with models for transmitting knowledge about expressing sexually appropriate behavior, and courting. Discussion of sexuality was not uncomfortable among youth and those given the responsibility to provide the information.

The descriptions in this chapter have revealed the isolation felt by young women today in terms of obtaining information about reproduction. This sense of isolation emanates from the "hands off" approach by the parents, teachers and churches. The attitudes, knowledge and behavior that young women exhibit towards their reproductive behavior may stem from the filtered and incongruent information that they receive from schools, church and from peers and aunties, who are usually their age mates. These age mates are equally uninformed. Most of the information from mothers relates to expectations or rules for performing traditional gender roles.

Thus, young women are not provided with a solid information base to use to make personal decisions regarding their reproductive behavior. They receive information based on restrictive codes of behavior that are devoid of explanations or rationales for behavior. They experience limited socializing opportunities with males and informal public interaction is not allowed. What results is a secretive pattern of sexual interaction between men and women. Such interaction cannot benefit from community support or sanctions. The lack of adequate, timely and effective information and limited development of the male and female relationships could lead to generations of young women who are uninformed and who are less able to make autonomous decisions regarding their reproductive behavior. The precipitous involvement in sexual intimacy before a well developed and public male-female relationship has been formed places young women at risk.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Ethnographic reports are generally descriptive and not interpretative. Wolcott(l990) in fact cautions against the tendency in qualitative research to go beyond reporting what is and using these studies as platforms to make pronouncements of what ought to be. He suggests, " A critical divide separates the observable from the realm of values about good and better"(p. 95). How then might the qualitative researcher bring the research to some conclusion? His suggestion is to err on the side of the conservative, to review succinctly what has been attempted, what has been learned, and what new questions have been raised. The challenge to the researcher is to leave both the researcher and the reader reflecting on the key issues which have been addressed.

As a Home Economics practitioner, I believe that it is important for the researcher to ponder the possible implications of these data for Home Economists who are concerned about young women's reproductive decision making in transrural, African contexts. Thus the plan for the concluding chapter of this thesis will be to answer four questions: 1) What was attempted in the research, 2) What has been learned as evidenced by the themes that were identified in the data and the relationship between those themes, 3) What new questions have been generated by these data, and 4) What are the possible implications for Home Economics researchers and educators? The discussion in this chapter will utilize relevant literature to extend the descriptions, pose questions or identify discrepancies or paradoxes within the descriptions in order to generate possible implications of the findings.

The Research Process : A Personal Reflection

The objective of this research was ambitious when one considers the complexity of the main concept, reproductive behavior, and the dynamic factors which are present to influence it in a changing cultural context. Reproductive behavior is not only multifaceted, but it is also difficult to capture in any one study. Thus, any research study on this topic can only hope to obtain partial answers to the question. This is particularly so when the female partner is the primary respondent. A full description of reproductive behavior requires a description of the views of males as well as females.

The focus on young women's reproductive behavior was predicated on more than a practical rationale. The initial interest in young women's reproductive behavior was triggered by four factors: 1) a recognition of the key role which young women play in shaping reproductive behavior in a culture, 2) the serious present and future implications of behavioral practices in this realm for young African women and their children, 3) the acknowledged impact of rapidly changing social and cultural conditions (e.g. contraception, expanded employment opportunities for women) on young women's reproductive behaviors, 4) the social costs to young women (e.g. the cycle of poverty for young women and their children) and to Kenyan society (e.g. provision of basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter, and 5) the absence of data which detail young African women's views of this complex phenomenon.

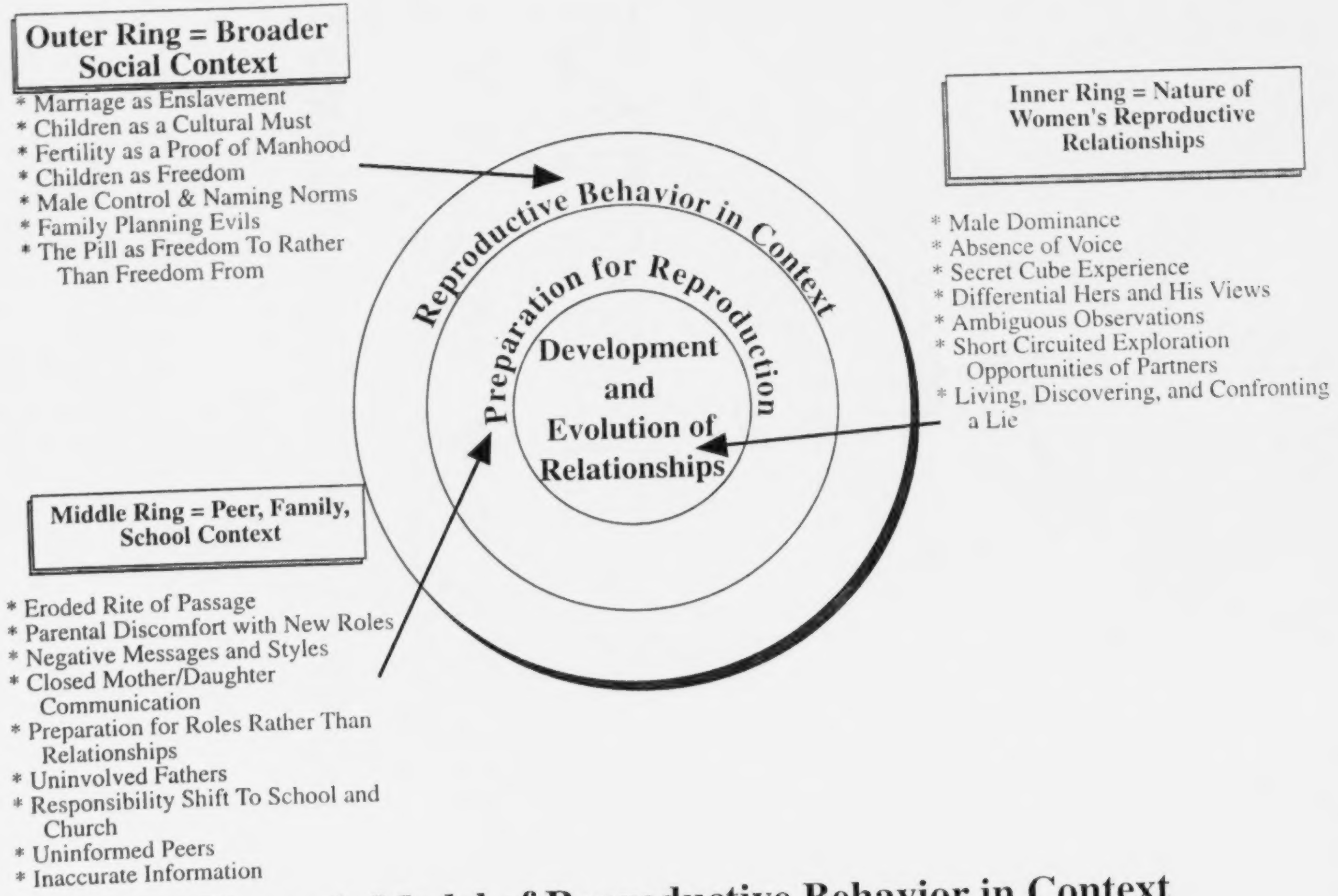
An ethnographic approach was selected to provide a rich description of reproductive behaviors in a particular cultural context. The area, Njoro, was selected to represent a changing social context. Nine young Kikuyu women residing in this transrural community were identified as the primary respondents. Field work was concluded during June 1991-February 1992. Data from sixteen secondary respondents (male partners, parents, educators, chiefs) provided additional information to elaborate, challenge or support young women's descriptions of their reproductive behavior.

The research process was an exploration of meaning both for the participants and for the researcher herself. Personally it involved a challenge of old assumptions about the way relationships were developed, the nature of interactions between young women and men in their relationships and a search for reality as viewed from the perspectives of young women living in this community. Steps of the research process were intensely personal for the researcher in that getting ready for, and carrying out, the research entailed confronting both potential insider and outsider biases. Analyzing the data required not only a categorization process and a search for commonalities among respondents, but demanded that the researcher step back and ask herself what is really happening here and what does it mean for young women and those who work with them? As a researcher studying my own culture, I found that my expectations were challenged by that reality. I was struck by the secrecy of the current relationships between young men and women and the seemingly passive role women took in these relationships. Perhaps this perplexity stemmed from the researcher's assumption that young women in Kenya had recently adopted an equalitarian view of relationships and were more active in decision making regarding the nature of relationships. As this passive picture emerged from the narratives, I was directed to seek further information to clarify such a relationship.

What was Learned

The nine primary key informants who participated in this study provided a profile of reproductive behaviors which were described in the previous chapter as themes organized under three main headings. These main headings were 1) Reproductive Behavior in Context, 2) Preparation for Reproduction, and 3) Development and Evolution of Relationships. Themes were derived through content coding the responses of the key informants and assigning them descriptive labels. Initial general codes were identified in each respondents' transcribed interviews and were later combined to form more abstract categories or themes which could encompass more than one category. This analysis resulted in the identification of themes under each category 1) Reproductive Behavior in Context, 2) Preparation for Reproduction, 3) Development and Evolution of Relationships. Figure 1 on the next page provides a summary of these themes.

The figure and the placement of the three categories in the figure, suggest an ecological relationship among them. An ecological relationship suggests that behavior is a function of the continuous interplay between a person and environment. Thus, from the ecological perspective, it is considered that there is mutual accommodation between an active person and the changing properties of the immediate settings (for example, the family, school, church, and peers) and by the larger context in which these settings are imbedded. The immediate settings in which an individual develops are referred to as the microsystems and the larger society as the macrosystems or environment (Brofenbrenner, 1979; Engberg, 1990). Considered in this view, the reproductive behavior of young women in relationships is both a product of environmental forces and a significant force itself (Melson, 1980; Whittaker, Schinke, & Gilchrist, 1986). Brofenbrenner (1979) would consider this to be a reciprocal relationship in which young women in the transrural community of Kenya move and reshape


Reproductive Behavior in Context
Preparation for Reproduction
Development
and
Evolution of
Relationships

Outer Ring = Broader Social Context

* Marriage as Enslavement
* Children as a Cultural Must
* Fertility as a Proof of Manhood
* Children as Freedom
* Male Control & Naming Norms
* Family Planning Evils
* The Pill as Freedom To Rather Than Freedom From

Middle Ring = Peer, Family, School Context

* Eroded Rite of Passage
* Parental Discomfort with New Roles
* Negative Messages and Styles
* Closed Mother/Daughter Communication
* Preparation for Roles Rather Than Relationships
* Uninvolved Fathers
* Responsibility Shift To School and Church
* Uninformed Peers
* Inaccurate Information

Inner Ring = Nature of Women's Reproductive Relationships

* Male Dominance
* Absence of Voice
* Secret Cube Experience
* Differential Hers and His Views
* Ambiguous Observations
* Short Circuited Exploration Opportunities of Partners
* Living, Discovering, and Confronting a Lie

Figure 1. Model of Reproductive Behavior in Context

their environment even as they are acted on by it. The figure goes from societal influence (outer ring) to family and peer influence (middle ring) to the nature of the personal relationships (inner ring). The elements included in the outer ring labeled Reproductive Behavior in Context are those aspects of the broader cultural and social context which young women identified as influencing reproductive behavior. The themes in this ring represent beliefs and values related to marriage and children and child bearing. Preparation for Reproduction is placed in the next ring to suggest that the basic beliefs noted in the outer ring influence or provide the context for elements and practices included in a young woman's preparation or socialization for reproductive behavior in her family, peer and community contexts. The themes in this category served to answer the questions : how are young women prepared for reproductive roles, who prepares them, what is the nature and content of that preparation? The inner ring, Development and Evolution of Relationships is placed in the centre to imply that both the value and belief context as well as the socialization factors potentially influence how personal reproductive relationships are formed, developed, maintained or terminated. The relationships among the three areas are dynamic and cannot adequately be represented in a one dimensional model. The following discussion will attempt to make the linkages among them more clear.

Reproductive Behavior in Context: Values and Beliefs Influencing Reproductive Behavior

The themes which were described in this section reveal a tension between a societies' traditional expectations for marriage and childbearing and young women and their male partners' changing expectations for these behaviors given current realities. The strongest belief and value which was apparent in the narratives was the value of children. Traditionally in the Kikuyu society, having children within marriage was considered a social duty. Children were perceived to enhance social status for parents and to bring joy to the clan. Childlessness denoted marriage failure (Kenyatta, 1938). This value of children was apparent for the key informants in this study. There was no question for these respondents that both men and women would have children. The themes *Children as a Cultural Must, Meeting the Naming Norms* and *Family Planning Evils* are evidence of the pronatalist beliefs of these young women.

The themes *Fertility as Proof of Manhood* and the *Pill as Freedom* to *Rather than Freedom* From appeared however to go beyond espousing the value of children. Pregnancy and childbearing were a means of obtaining or documenting the status of full manhood and womanhood. Mugo (1987) stated that in the past proof of manhood was attained by having as many wives and children as possible. From the narratives of the key informants in this study, this belief with respect to children seems prevalent today.

While such strong pronatalist beliefs might have been expected to coexist with pro-marriage beliefs, such was not the case. Surprisingly, given moral norms, marriage was not viewed as a necessary condition for childbearing. In fact, a man expected a woman to prove that she could have children before agreeing to marry her. Young men also viewed fathering children as a means of proving their own manhood, often soon after circumcision and often with several women. Traditionally, marriage in Kikuyu society was a relationship based upon an agreement between two families. Marriages however were not a formally arranged relationship. Both men and women exercised control in choice of a marital partner even though the males gained more control after marriage. Partners had clearly differentiated roles. There was predictability, security and stability associated with the marital state. Traditionally little was said about meeting a partner's emotional needs. None-the-less, marriage did meet economic and status functions, and children were generally born within the context of marriage.

The themes about marriage describe a very different reality with respect to current expectations for marriage. The traditionally positive view of marriage was not obvious. Instead, marriage, while still sought after by young women, was not viewed as a relationship which allowed women to be personally acknowledged. One theme, *Marriage as Enslavement*, was most reflective of this belief. Young women described marriage as the formalization of a man's control over a woman. Attitudes toward family planning revealed men's control of a woman's fertility as well. Suspicion that use of birth control would damage health or fertility was common. In some cases this was combined with a fear that family planning would provide women with the freedom to engage in sexual relations with men other than their partners.

It is not surprising, given these negative attitudes about marriage, that the theme *Children as Freedom* was identified. These young women apparently perceived that they could meet the cultural expectation of having children without entering into a relationship which limited their freedom. Such a belief has to be described within the context of the lives of these young women today. For those young women who were considering having a child (or already had a child) outside of marriage, they could most likely live at home with their parents and their parents would assist in the care of that child. Given changed attitudes toward women working outside the home or village, they would possibly have the opportunity to work and provide some kind of economic support for their child. In the past single parenthood was sanctioned. As a short term arrangement, the current alternative may have appeal. Given the fact that these women were relatively young, one wonders however about the long term viability of such a view. Over time, would such a living and child care situation enhance the well-being of women and children? How would such a situation be viewed if the young woman were to develop a relationship that led to marriage with another man?. Would the child(ren) of the young woman be accepted in the newly merged family? If such the child(ren) would be left under the care of the maternal grandparents as is sometimes the case, what are the psychological impacts of this arrangement on the child and mother?.

These themes, reflecting beliefs that marriage is viewed as relationship of domination and that childbearing is a means to achieving status described a confusing context for reproductive decision making. The next section will discuss how young women are prepared for their reproductive roles within this context.

Preparation for Reproduction: A Story of Socialization

In order to understand the nature of reproductive behavior, one needs to explore these matters within the context of the messages of socialization about appropriate sex traits and roles for the female and male partner. In Figure 1 such socialization has been described by the young women in this study as being reluctantly given (*Uninvolved Fathers, Parental Discomfort with new Roles, Responsibility Shift to School and Church*), incomplete (*Eroded Rite of Passage, Preparation for Roles rather than Relationships*), inaccurate (*Inaccurate Information, Uninformed Peers*), and negative (*Negative Messages and Styles, Closed Mother/Daughter Communication*).

These descriptors reveal a sense of ambivalence about the socialization roles of families and society at large, when faced with the new challenges of a transition from traditional life to modernity. The following section will include a discussion of the socialization challenges faced by parents in the transrural context.

In the past, socialization for reproduction for young women was provided for by the grandmothers and aunties. Further, circumcision as a rite of passage provided the context within which socialization about sexuality and reproduction were conveyed. In addition, young women joined women's groups that enhanced their learning about reproductive roles. However due to changes in the social cultural system (e.g new educational roles, changing sexual norms, technology, work patterns and the decline of rites of passage), families are faced with new challenges for socializing young women. Some authors suggest that those who took passive roles in the past, in this case parents, become more active participants in education and decision making (Massanat, 1987). Such action is expected in areas that were not considered to be within their realm in the past. Such a challenge faces the parents even though they have not been prepared with the information, strategies or support to accomplish it.

Taking on new socialization roles in areas of sexuality and reproduction is not easy and is apparently received by parents with ambivalence. Such a reluctant pattern has been observed in other cultural contexts. In North America for example, mothers reportedly feel incompetent to discuss matters that relate to sexuality with their children. This sense of incompetence creates lack of confidence and therefore the tendency to avoid discussion on aspects of sexuality (Kieren & Morse, 1992). The pattern in Kenya had a different history than in North America because socialization was closely tied to the circumcision as a rite of passage. In the Kenyan context, education and religion have been described as having had a major influence on changing the attitudes of people with respect to their past traditions and socialization mechanisms about sexuality and reproduction (Ahlberg, 1991; United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1987). This has been particularly the case with circumcision as a rite of passage for women. This practice has been largely abandoned for the female gender on the basis of their physical and sexual health and religious views.

The rite of passage traditionally included more than the physical operation. Counseling and discussions about sexuality and reproduction were carried out by grandmothers and aunties. While the removal of the physical operation for women is a welcome change, the loss of the counseling and role modeling leaves a gap. The gap was apparent for non-circumcised as well as circumcised women. In this study, while two of the nine women interviewed indicated that they were circumcised, according to respondents, this proportion does not represent the number in the total area who are circumcised. The fact that they expressed a lack of understanding for the meaning of circumcision provides evidence that it was not accompanied by other forms of instruction as was the case in the past.

The following section will focus on the sources of information for reproduction, the nature of this information and the content and the accuracy of the information disseminated to young women in the transrural context.

Information about preparation for reproduction was considered to be reluctantly given. Themes such as *uninvolved fathers*, and *parental discomfort with new roles* are reflective of this reluctance. Fathers were considered to be uninvolved presumably because of the perceived respect that these women had for their fathers. Respect in this context meant observance of the status associated with ascribed roles and positions; in this case to the role of the father as the head of the family. Mothers were considered to give messages that were indirect and reprimanding in nature, thus not always communicating positive meanings. However, mothers were credited with socializing young women about the stereotypical traditional roles of women. For example, the messages young women received from their mothers was that the role of women in relationships was one of the nurturer and helper. Strong messages were sent from the mother to daughter that wives should strive to please others, especially the parents in-law, after marriage. Thus young women were prepared for prescribed roles (e.g role expectations and family role structure) rather than participatory relationships (e.g interaction process and evolving relationship development).

When information about sexuality was communicated to young women by their mothers, it was not done in a way that was relevant to them. Rather, this information was presented within a framework of traditional morality of the role of women. The information was communicated in a negative judgmental style with reference to sexual behavior. It is not surprising that young women avoided communicating about sexuality with parents, instead confiding with their peers about relations with young men and other matters related to their sexuality. The expected punishment or chastisement from their mothers served as a deterrent to openness about sexuality. This *closed mother/daughter communication* ensured the maintenance of secrecy and the masking of feelings related to sexuality. While peers were confidants, they were inexperienced and uninformed and the information they shared with others consisted of *inaccurate information* and myths about sexuality.

Educators in particular were perceived by community members to be more knowledgeable and skilled than parents to disseminate information about sexuality and reproduction. Entrusting the schools with the task of education for sexuality is not unique for Kenya. This has been the experience of developed nations such as the United States of America. In this transrural Kenyan context, however, participants suggested that schools and churches were no more interested in carrying out these roles than were parents. The theme *responsibility shift to the school and church* was developed from the narratives of secondary key informants. These informants indicated that community members believed educators should have assumed the teaching role. However,this shift or responsibility to the school and church was not well taken by educators due to the widespread belief that teaching about reproduction and sexuality would encourage young women to engage in premarital sexual intercourse. A similar argument for an avoidance approach to sexuality education has been heard in North America. Those who oppose this type of education take a morality approach suggesting that sex before marriage is sinful and that sex education promotes intercourse (Peterson, 1989).

The themes that evolved about preparation for reproduction indicate that this socialization does not provide adequate preparation for taking on important reproductive roles and making long term decisions. Since such roles are interpersonal ones, a researcher might ask further, what impact this inadequate preparation have for a young woman and her self formation, in that self formation is a key factor in relationship development? The following discussion will illuminate the messages of socialization that were received by young women in the transrural context and how these messages in turn may influence the self formation of young women and their subsequent relationships with young men.

While both male and female gender roles are culturally defined, the focus of this discussion will be on the influences of cultural socialization on the female gender. If considered in this context, we can understand how self concepts or images are formed early in life and how women emerge with unique ways of knowing and being that are more common among women than men (Belenky etal.,1986).

Through the process of socialization, culture shapes the way in which its members think about and view the world around them. This is achieved through the complex interaction between parents, kin, and community members at the micro environment, and educational, economic, religious, political and legal institutions at the macro level (Brofenbrenner, 1979; de Graft-Johnson, 1981; Engberg, 1990). Through this socialization processes, cultural values regarding the roles of women and men are taught, modeled and learned. Certain behaviors are specifically labeled for each gender. These behaviors are encouraged for girls and others for boys. The type of the messages delivered to different genders, in turn begins to reinforce certain cultural expectations for the behavior of girls and boys (Arliss, 1993). Thus, young children assimilate meanings, definitions, beliefs and values which support the dominant societal structures. Thus, as children interact with their environment, they develop frameworks to gain an understanding and make sense of their life experiences (Mierow, 1990; Milner, 1983). The assumptions they form about 'truth' and 'reality' for their context shape the way they see the world and themselves as participants in it (Belenky etal., 1986).

Prilleltensky (1989) suggests that to be socialized means that one has absorbed and accommodated to predetermined conceptions of the way things are and ought to be. Thus, in order for one to be able to occupy a certain place and role in society, one has to traverse successfully the rites of passage. Therefore, the perception of young women in this study as being powerless and lacking control in their relationships with young men may stem from their interpretation of the place of their gender in Kikuyu society. Further, this interpretation may be supported by the expectations derived from their unique previous experiences of being female. These interpretations not only impact on a young woman's identity and relations, but potentially affect young women's reproductive behavior.

The formation of the self concept is influenced by the internalized understanding of the meanings derived from the process of gathering information about who we are from our social interactions. This process starts early in life through interactions with parents and significant others. Later, teachers and peers provide children with vital information necessary for self-concept formation (Blumer, 1975; Cooley, 1967). From social experiences, children learn how people evaluate them and compare their attributes to those of others. For example, children learn about their intellectual abilities, beauty and other qualities from evaluations provided to them by significant others. These evaluations become the foundation upon which to base self- evaluations for each gender. For example, if young women learn that they occupy an inferior position in society, they may underestimate their abilities and set lower life goals for themselves. As adult women, they may find that they have less control over their lives and those of others, and less access to resources (Arliss, 1993; Belenky etal., 1986; Lenney, 1981).

Women in this transrural setting were given messages that it was inappropriate to seek power in relationships. Instead young women were taught to see themselves, not through their own eyes, but through the status and recognition which was offered by external sources. Women learned to define their social place through the status of their husbands in marriage or through their children. Thus, women in this study indicated that they rarely acquired the ability to control and influence their own lives directly. These findings are supported by the work of Butler (1981) who reported that when women describe feelings of helplessness and lack of control over their own lives, they are often referring to an inability to influence other people (a characteristic of powerless positions). In failing to make a satisfying environment, women accept what is defined for them by others.

Young women received double messages regarding their personal identity. On the one hand, young women expressed that they were encouraged to follow their interests by attending school, achieving an education and developing skills. But on the other hand, a multitude of cultural cues proclaimed, with varying degrees of subtlety, that a young woman must remain adaptable because what she will become and where she will go will depend ultimately upon the man that she will marry and with whose life she will become identified. Socialization messages, especially those received from their mothers, indicated clearly that they were being socialized for roles in marriage that implied subservience rather than a life of autonomy and independence.

The female condition of powerlessness was typically related to the traditional ascribed characteristics of women. These young women may have felt powerless to change their situations because the messages they had received about their inferior position in society were so strong and because of their own lack of support or resources. My position is that in most cases this happens because women are striving to seek personal fulfillment through men rather than through their own achievements or "being". For example, in male female relationships, young women felt the demand to prove themselves as desirable for marriage by denying themselves of their own needs. Parents and church authorities gave young women conforming messages. This position is supported by Butler (1981), who states that in relationships, women with low self concepts allowed their partners to make the decisions and operated from a passive position, trying never to do anything that might displease their partners. Butler's findings are consistent with the findings of this study. Narrative reports by young women in the present study described how they waited for men to determine when to meet and where to meet and what to do.

Belenky etal.(1986) suggest that powerless women often look for personal resources from the most barren soils. Young women in this study relied on their male partners and other peers for guidance, support and information about sexuality and reproduction yet these sources were not only inaccurate and discrepant but also lacking in concern for a woman as a person. In the secret cube experiences, young men dictated the terms within which the relationships would develop, such as the time limits of visitations to cubes by young women, whether sex was to occur, what material resources would be provided. Young women rarely negotiated these matters.

Women therefore learn through socialization to take a passive role in relationships. They were socialized to take care of the emotional concerns of others and to function in a dependent manner. These patterns are tied to the cultural assumptions that in marriage the male is the head of the family household, and the female plays a supportive role (Kenyatta, 1938).

Agents who prepared or socialized these young women for reproduction used threats or negative images of sexuality such as labeling the woman as loose if she were to fail to follow expected role patterns. For example, young women in this study reported that a proper woman was one who was respectable and who helped others. While on the surface these seem positive, these same traits can be used to victimize women. This author believes that women victimize themselves by performing what are considered to be "good deeds" (for example, pleasing in laws or husband) but with no guarantee of achieving their own goals such as marital, economic stability, or future satisfying partnerships.

Women did not openly express their feelings because of fear of the labels that would be attached to their behavior. For example, they feared that they would be branded as "loose women". These findings are not unique for the Kenyan situation. Butler (1981) and Arliss (1993) reported that in North America, even though women are less inhibited than men in expressing their positive feelings, the individual conditioning experiences force them to hold back due to fear of being thought of as forward.

The work of Butler (1981) supports the findings of this study that revealed how young women's perception of the place they held in society affected their sense of control over life events and their decision making processes. For example, the women in this study presented themselves as being acted upon and as unable to stand up for their values. They submitted begrudgingly to the men's demands for sexual relations because .."men would not leave them alone after they had entered the cubes". The lack of development of an autonomous self concept appeared to be a critical factor in shaping the decision making patterns of young women.

Development and Evolution of Relationships

Figure 1, page 109 summarized the six main themes which were used to describe young women's views of the development and evolution of relationships. Key characteristics of these themes are: unbalanced power (*Absence of Voice*), secrecy (*Secret Cube Experiences*, and *Living, Discovering and Confronting a Lie)* , uncoordinated expectations (*Differential Hers and His Views, Ambiguous Observations*) and incomplete bonding (*Short Circuited Exploration Opportunities of Partners*).

One can again look to socialization patterns to provide an exploration of this view of reality. The nature of interactions between young women and men can be understood when we realize that interactions are compatible with the values and beliefs acquired from the larger societal context. Powerful influences at the macro level including economic, educational, religious and political as well as family institutions impact on the socialization of young women. The messages that are communicated by these social institutional systems determine the type of preparation for reproductive behavior for young women. For example, if a young woman believes from her socialization processes, that status comes from having a relationship with a man, if her sense of self or identity is dependent upon acquiring a future role as wife and mother to satisfy the needs of others; if her values are tentative and flexible; if she believes that having and caring for a baby are the primary signs of womanhood, then she will define and see her accomplishments through these avenues. It is the strength and consistency of the messages that are received that determine the approach employed by young women in the development, maintenance and termination of their relationships with men. These messages also determine the nature of the relationships that are formed.

The development and evolution of relationships of these young women are clearly described by the term unbalanced power. The theme *Male Dominance* permeated all the interactions that took place between young women and men. For example, young women perceived themselves to have no words with which to initiate relations with young men or to negotiate with men on an equitable basis for their own rights. Young women who had used their voice in initiating relationships or negotiating their rights were considered 'loose' in morals. Thus the evidence of the theme *Absence of Voice* was also pervasive and was of major concern for the young women because of the associated social costs for those women to be branded as 'loose'. Thus, young women in this study perceived themselves to be subject to external authority and waited for others to make the decisions about their lives for them.

As stated previously, the anticipated punishment of young women for expressing their feelings about sexuality ensured secrecy in their relations. Young women regarded "being asked to visit the cubes of young men" as the same circumstance as "being chosen" by these men for a long term relationship. "Being chosen" for women in the present study seemed to confer value by showing others that a woman had been found "worthy". Thus, women were striving to be chosen at the risk of abandoning their own needs and personal aspirations. Abandoning personal needs was not the only cost. However, as demonstrated above, these young women also had to succumb to social pressure to have children to prove they were worthy of being chosen.

It is perhaps because being chosen is so valued that young women in the transrural context actively engaged in visiting cubes of young men even though they were aware of the possibilities that they may not become the wives of these young men. A young woman who was not chosen seemed to lack social validation as a worthwhile person. Within the network of young women, it was through being chosen that a young woman demonstrated that she was worthwhile.

The secret living in the cube experiences had the potential of serious personal and social costs for the young women. For example young women who did not become chosen as potential wives (*aa gutuura*), became stigmatized for having lived in the cubes. Other costs included having to deal with the strained relationships with their parents after they returned home. This was aggravated by the fact that women had left their homes secretly with the hope that their relationships would develop into lasting relationships. Further, women who became pregnant during the secret cube live in experiences, were not supported by the young men and in many cases the males denied responsibility for the young women's pregnancies. A double standard was evident for women and men. For the men, these experiences were regarded as positive and they were proud to have made women pregnant. The negative attitudes held towards the young women and subsequently about their children did not spill over to the young men who impregnated them. This double standard confirms the low status of women that is interwoven with sensitive and complex cultural values. The double standard emerges time and again to afflict a young woman ostracized for becoming pregnant and her child for being born out of wed-lock (World Health Organization Chronicle, 1984).

While women defined their secret cube living in experiences as marriages, men simply defined them as sexual relationships. Women discovered that their expectations of relationships were not the same as the men's.This is not surprising in a society that supports a gender based double standard for normative behavior and values in sexuality. The ideal characteristics of a partner were distinguishably different for the young women and men. Young women and men seemed to be engaged in two courtships that were different for each one of them.

Sexual interaction with men proved to be disappointing for the young women in this study because their expectations differed greatly from those of their partners. This may be so because men and women learned different role expectations, different motives and behaviors as well as had divergent meanings of sexuality. Change has affected women differently than men. For example the males in the Kikuyu traditions learned to give full expression to their sexuality as an indication and demonstration of their masculinity, but female sexual expression in the present day Kenya is not encouraged due to the newly adopted religious,and educational values.

Further, women made *Ambiguous Observations* in their relationships with men. In many cases while women claimed that they made observations of young men to discern the status of their relationships, the women seemed to be observing the man's capacity to provide them with material support rather than to participate as a partner in important life decisions. This is not a surprising finding given the nature of the socialization messages that the young women received. For example, the message that a young woman's identity will ultimately be defined by the man that she marries and the family that she marries into. This is so because according to the traditions a woman through marriage becomes a daughter of the family that she marries into. Thus a young woman's final self-definition would be powerfully shaped by the identity of her new family.

The theme *Short Circuited Exploration of Partners* describes the nature of the relationships between young women and men. Because of the secrecy involved, young women visited the cubes at night and the relationships were not acknowledged. These explorations of partners were made to meet the needs of young men who decided when they would be visited. Women had no equitable basis on which to negotiate events in these relationships so they waited to be asked to visit. Research suggests that a person is more likely to dictate the conditions of the relationship if their interest in the continuation of the affair is of least interest. Waller and Hill (1951) called this the Principle of Least Interest. Brehm (1992) suggested that in a relationship between two people, the person who is less dependent tends to have more power. This principle of least interest may provide some explanation for unbalanced interactions between young women and men in the cubes.

The currently observed separation of young girls and boys in the changing Kikuyu social cultural context is clearly a diversion from the traditional channels of socialization. Such a separation is creating two cultures, each with its own characteristics and world view. Young men learn to be dominant and to dictate the terms of reference for their relationships with women, while the young women learn that to be acceptable and to forego their needs in life. The two cultures are confronted in cube relationships for which they are inadequately prepared. When the representatives of the two cultures meet, they have contradicting goals. This was clearly the case for the young women in this study, who seemed to have goals that were different from those held by the young men with whom they were having relationships.

The discussion above has illuminated the socialization of young women in the transrural context and how this had an impact on their self formation and the manner in which relationships are developed, maintained and terminated. Young women clearly played a passive role in negotiating terms of their relationships. Belenky etal. (1986) and Gilligan (1982) have suggested that the different forms of socialization for females and males are responsible for the way women learn to be passive, dependent and incompetent and men learn to be active, and assertive. Passivity denotes inaction and submissiveness while dependency denotes subordination, control by, and reliance on others. Passivity and dependency imply such behaviors as following rather than leading and lacking participation in decision making processes even in issues that affect women's lives directly. Research suggests that cultural experiences which help maintain and nourish the notions of passivity and a feeling of isolation from being connected with others result in women's low or incomplete self images (Belenky etal.1986). These cultural experiences also influence the way women learn to see themselves in relationships to men and have a major impact on the interactional patterns of their relationships (Arliss, 1993). This researcher is in agreement with this position. The research findings have clearly demonstrated the impact of socialization on young women's reproductive behavior in this transrural context. Women have more losses in terms of preparation for sexuality (e.g. holding back of information and participation, and closed doors for contraception).

However, socialization provides only partial insight to such a complex phenomena as reproductive behavior. While Belenky etal. (1986) have taken a strong socialization position to explain women's view of self, socialization alone probably does not explain reproductive behavior for these women. Other social forces undoubtedly shape the the way women view themselves. Researchers such as Albee (1981, 1986), Cereseto & Waitzkin (1986) Mednick (1989) Prilleltensky (1989), Ryan (1971) and Sarason (1981a, 1981b) have argued that behavior is not a function of a single attitude nor the sole product of one's thinking; but that it always involves various and often competing attitudes, some of them being internal and others external. Thus in ecological terms, reproductive behavior of young women occurs as a result of the influences of the continuous interplay between forces that are operative at both the micro and macro levels. Considered in this view, it is important to understand how competing attitudes are combined and how they interact to form a joint effect on behavior such as reproductive behavior.

The economic and environmental variables of a society or community exercise a considerable influence in the mental and physical well-being of a population (Albee, 1981; Cereseto & Waitzkin, 1986). From the perspective of these researchers, the sense of powerlessness of women in society may be due in part to the limited viable options for them.

A purely socialization based argument about the way women interact with males is also problematic because it places maximal emphasis on sex differences and attributes as causality in early female socialization. Essentially early socialization processes are perceived to have strong and long-range effects. This perspective, places the burden of change entirely on the person, implying that individuals could have lived different ways of life by opting to do so and does not lend itself to an examination of cultural ideology about the meaning and significance of gender within a social economic and structural context (Albee 1981; Henley 1977; Prilleltensky 1989; Ryan, 1971; & Sarason 1981a; 1981b).

The present research findings have demonstrated that beliefs, values and socialization influence how young women's relationships with men are formed, developed and maintained in the transrural context. These findings clearly demonstrate the complex interplay of historical and social forces on the reproductive behavior of young Kikuyu women living in a transitional setting. The findings are supportive of the view that an understanding of the influences of other social networks such as those of the educational and religious institutions is critical in the study of reproductive behavior. While young women may be beginning to question some of the relationships with men, particularly those that they find controlling (for example, marriage being viewed as enslavement), the economic and social institutions remain unchanged. In fact, evidence from this study has demonstrated the role such institutions have in maintaining those traditions. Making changes in reproductive relationships requires a focus on the historical and social forces that influence women's reproductive behavior (Albee, 1981; Henley, 1977, 1985; Ryan, 1971; Sarason, 1981a, 1981b).

The present research findings are supportive of the importance of studying gender in its social historical context. The findings for example, have demonstrated that the reproductive behavior of young women was greatly influenced by the social expectations of other people in the community regardless of how the young women were socialized in their home settings. Many of the expectations for young women were based on the traditional beliefs of the role of women in Kikuyu society.

In my view, socialization plays a significant role in shaping behavior, beliefs and attitudes and consequently the way people view themselves in society. Although the issue of viable options for women is important, cultural beliefs about the image of a socially acceptable woman play a crucial role in the way women perceive themselves.

Unanswered Questions

Research of any kind often generates additional questions. The previous discussion has already alluded to some of those questions. A review of the research data identified other gaps. Several areas of the nine women's reproductive behavior were not well detailed. For example, a critical question relates to discovering how young women think changes might be effected in strongly held values related to childbearing and status. The likelihood of young women limiting their births in a context where strong traditional beliefs about naming customs, children providing happiness, proof of manhood and virility abound is very low. Such cultural pressure is powerful. The question is crucial because it relates to family size and has an influence on the future generations of Kenya and the capacity of the government to provide services. Other questions relate to concerns about women and children born out of marriage. What is the future of the children born in these relationships? What concerns do women have about these children? What are young women's concerns under these circumstances? What is the nature of freedom for women outside of a marriage relationship? How are women's emotional needs being met if they are not being met in marriage? What are their expectations for these needs?.

The answers to these questions are necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of a dynamic socio-cultural situation on reproductive decision making. In addition, the questions raised here are provocative for Home Economics professionals working in the transrural setting. Professionals working in this setting need to ask themselves some serious questions about their understanding of young women's reproductive behavior, their decision making power and the social environment. The following discussion will focus on the critical reflection that is needed for Home Economics professionals.

Adopting a Grassroots Framework with an Ecological Outlook

The trend in Home Economics practice in Kenya has been toward the dissemination of piecemeal information by professionals who assume they already know the needs of women in developing nations. Women have not been active in deciding which strategies will meet their own needs. Yet women have traditionally owned their information systems. For example, Kikuyu women have shared information about reproduction and sexuality among themselves both between generations and among peers. Such an informal social network of support was beneficial in inculcating knowledge of important aspects of women's lives. The traditional information systems can still be important components in the provision of information relating to reproduction and sexuality for young women today. Information sharing can occur between younger women as they engage in personal, critical reflection of their life experiences with regard to reproductive behavior. There is evidence in the narratives in this study that this has already begun. Young women's reflection may re-establish the channels of communication with older women and celebrate the interlinkages between generations and among peers. Inclusion of older women in the information exchanges reflects the recognition of the knowledge base of elders which have tended to be reduced by the greater access to knowledge by youth through formal education and mass media (UNESCO, 1987). By reflecting on what has been positive and negative about their experiences, women can reassess what they would like to change.

Inherent in a reflective approach is the belief that there is a reciprocal relationship between individuals and family in the micro environment and the larger macro environment. For example, a family's interaction in certain ways impacts on their decision making process. Ultimately, the results of the collective decision making which families make impacts economically and socially on the larger society (Vaines, 1988). Additionally,demands for economic stability of families and the health and well-being of children are placed on the larger society. Thus, this approach embraces an ecological theme in which there is reciprocity between individuals as they move and reshape their environment and as the environment in turn acts on individuals. In this perspective Brofenbrenner (1979) characterized human development as:

> The progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, grown human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger context in which the settings are embedded. (p. 21)

Further assumptions underlying the adoption of a reflective approach is that people possess knowledge, are insightful and are able to determine meanings which underlie everyday actions (Morgaine, 1992). For this particular study, young women described the reality of their lived experiences as they saw events unfolding in their ecological environment. Further, young women described their reality in terms of the factors that they saw influencing their reproductive behavior. The reflective approach is a critical appraisal of the context within which certain realities take place. The practice of such an orientation allows for people to continuously create and recreate themselves through dialogue by using their wisdom, to speak at their level, and to share their experiences (Vaines, 1988). This sharing reveals the transformation that a group of people have undergone and the influences of such a process on their actions.

Reflection brings into perspective the strengths and the relative weaknesses in a system. For example, young women in the African transrural social context would share their ideas with other women and potential partners for changing situations in their relationships. Young women would bring an advantage to the context because they possess knowledge of their lived experiences. Critical reflection of their lived experiences would provide a framework within which young women could guide their actions and choices for the future. Such a reflection is the first step in reshaping personal relationships.

The Implications of the Findings of this Research for Home Economics Practice

In order to operate as a reflective practitioner, professionals working with young women in the transrural context would have to ask themselves some serious questions about their understanding of the needs of these young women and about the environment and the context in which reproductive behavior takes place. Critical reflection by professionals is necessary in order to challenge biases and choose appropriate practice methods. Critical appraisal for professionals would involve stepping out of ones own reality and looking in at these women's experiences, and providing psychological space to hear the human stories of individuals about themselves and their perceived roles in their environment. For example, as professionals realize that they could be outsiders in their own communities because of their own unique life experiences, they are challenged to move from the "taken for granted" to hear the human story. Seeking such realities of life opens the door for growth of all participants. The human story frees people to understand one another.

However, the influences of the cultural and historical contexts must be taken into consideration. For example, mothers still experience discomfort discussing matters related to sexuality with their daughters. Because sexual communication is a taboo and is still adhered to in the present Kenyan context, it would be important to incorporate other informal networks, such as those of other community women who could be regarded as aunties of young women. Recruitment of such women in informal networks would ensure that young women share their experiences with other women and acquire a cultural value base. Recruited aunties maybe considered to be one step removed from the authority of parents and thus play a mediating role of acknowledging the sexuality of young women as was the case in the traditional normative structure. The role of Home Economics practitioners could be to facilitate the interaction and to disseminate accurate information about subjects such as sex, reproduction, relationships and roles to both groups.

In adopting a grassroots framework with an ecological outlook, Home Economics professionals might challenge what Albee (1981) called the defect model in which the individual is blamed for unfavorable experiences in her life and hence efforts are almost exclusively directed at changing the individual and not the socioeconomic situation.

Such a grassroots view takes into consideration the fact that the individual is a social and historical being whose life experiences are connected from a wider social political context. The act of blaming the victim implies a basic assumption of an acontextual view of the individual therefore no consideration is given to the social and historical circumstances.that may influence our way of thinking and operating in society. Consideration of the social historical context of individuals is the next challenge for home economics professionals in the year 2000 and beyond. Such a goal can be attained through critical reflective practice.

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Appendix

TABLE 1

AGE, EDUCATION LEVEL, EMPLOYMENT OF PRIMARY INFORMANTS

Identification Code	Age	Education Level	# of Children	Status	Employment
Mw	22	6 pri	1	Pri.sch.dropout	Maid
Mt	12	5 pri	0	In school	N/A
Bb	18	4 sec	0	High sch. dropout	None
Ml	17	2 sec	0	In school	N/A
N	18	6 pri	1	Pri. sch.dropout	Casual
K	16	2 sec	expectant	High sch. dropout	Casual
Mu	24	2 sec	1	High sch. dropout	Casual
W	24	4 sec	1	High sch. dropout	Self-employed
Wa	17	2 sec	0	In school	N/A

Pri= Primary School

Sec= Secondary School

Maid= Live-in nanny or female houseworker

EXPANDED DESCRIPTION OF TWO RESPONDENTS

The following is an expanded account of two of the nine primary key informants.

The first respondent was coded as Mt. She was 12 years old at the time of the study. She had five years of primary education and she was still enroled and attending school.

The second respondent was coded as Mw. She was 22 years old. Mw, had six years of primary education. She was working in a home as a maid.

Mt

Mt's family background

Mt is the fourth and last child of a polygamous family. She is the daughter of the second (youngest) wife. Her family composition is made up of two other sisters and a brother. Her step mother and her children live in the next plot of land that her father had subdivided for the two wives. Both women and their children are friendly and visit one another often.

Mt's father spends most of his time at the house of Mt's mother since she is the younger wife and possibly the one he favors more. However, he also visits his family and provides for their material needs e.g. children's education or arranges for his daughters' marriages--the negotiations for marrying off his daughters. Not much information was gathered about this other wife's family but the interviews held were related to circumcision and preparation for reproduction.

A typical school day for Mt.

Her schedule starts at 5 a.m when she wakes up and lights up the fire in the family kitchen. This is a three stone fireplace. Firewood is generally kept away from moisture and where it can dry up. They do not use matches to start a fire. They save coals from the day before to use as starters. After the fire is lit, Mt puts tea water on the stove, waits 20 minutes for water to boil and prepares tea. Tea is a must in the morning. After tea is ready, she serves her father and mother if her father is present. He has an older wife so he spends some nights at his other wife's house. Then Mt prepares to go to school. She gets in her school uniform. Her school is 25 kilometres away from the family home. She has to walk 3 kilometres to the main road to catch the *matatu. Matatu* are mini buses or station wagon vehicles, part of a privately run passenger transportation system.

After she gets to the *matatu*/bus stage (transit centre), she waits for a matatu that the tout (conductor) will allow young people to board. Young people are usually rejected because they cannot pay full fare and in many cases they cannot stand in the bus since it is illegal. So they take the place of an adult on the bus who would pay full fare,

She finally boards the *matatu* or bus for the next district centre where she alights and walks to school. School starts at 8:00 a.m and closes at 4.00 p.m. for the young people who are not intending to do standard eight exams. In most cases those young people have to wait for longer hours to study (prep) in preparation for the end of the primary school exams.

On a typical day, Mt attends six different lectures. Lectures may include Maths, English, or Home Science. It is a taxing day because for each of the classes she has assignments to do. Mt leaves school by 4.30 p.m. She walks to the *matatu*/bus stage and repeats the process of waiting for the *matatu*/bus that would allow her to board. She returns home by 6.30 p.m.

At home she starts her evening schedule. She prepares tea if her mother has not been able to prepare the evening tea. Sometimes she has to re-light the fire. She starts to help her mother cook the evening meal if not already done. A typical meal may include frying of kale with tomatoes. Then she would prepare a thick gruel of maize meal (*ugali*) that the family eats for dinner. Other duties may include milking the cows and for this family, there were a few goats that were milked. Mt would then wash dishes that may not have been washed after lunch and then serve the meal for the family.

After the family meal, Mt would wash the dishes again and prepare the evening tea before her parents retire for the night. Typically it is the work of the young women to prepare the evening meals or tea for the family and to wash the dishes. In many cases it is accepted that this is the work of the young women. If there is no water source near by for the family, then young women may have to go to fetch the water from the river after school. For Mt, the family had dug up a shallow borehole that was covered with metal sheeting. During the dry seasons the borehole would dry up so Mt and her mother would have to fetch water from the river. In many cases however, this borehole provided enough water for family use and for the animals.

Other duties for Mt. may include feeding the animals (cows, goats) after school. Sometimes she may just herd the cows in the family compound if there are no other green leaves with which to feed the animals. In most cases however, it is expected that her brother would help her with this chore. If she had to feed the animals, then she would have to lock them up in the evening. Typically, the goats and sheep would be locked up in a separate shed from the cows so she had to separate the animals for the night.

Mt would, after completion of the work associated with food preparation and other duties, do her home work and retire for bed at about 11:00 p.m. She would repeat this pattern the following day except for the week ends.

Weekend duties.

The duties for the week end are different in that there is other family duties to be performed (e.g. fetching firewood, digging and land preparation when necessary for a particular season, washing of clothes, cleaning of home and washing of doilies or seat covers that were on all seats in the main living rooms (e.g.visitors room), fetching animal feeds (basically the greens on the family plot) or going further into the forest area to collect green grass for the animals.

Mw

Mw, 22 years old, 5 years of primary education

She dropped out of school because of lack of school fees and family alcohol problems at 12 years of age. Her mother brewed and sold alcohol from their one room house.

Family background

Mw came from a family with four siblings. She was the eldest daughter and had two younger siblings, a brother and a sister, and an older brother. Mw left home at the age of thirteen years to go and work as a house girl, in order to have a place to call home.

She was the sole provider for her family. Her mother had moved to a small town about 45 km away from home, where she brewed African beer (*muratina)* and sold it for profit. She was, according to her daughter an alcoholic and she rarely visited her children at home. The last time this key informant had any information about her mother was six months prior to this study. Mw's younger siblings had gone to visit their mother because they needed food. The mother lived in an area with abundance of food and therefore it was relatively cheap to purchase. Mw's father was absent from the home.

Mw is a mother of a girl who was five years old at the time of the study. Mw worked as a live-in maid (home worker). She and her daughter lived with her employer.

Her daily activities

Mw works for a family of six. The couple hold senior jobs in nearby institutions. Mw is responsible for cooking most of the family meals, washing clothes for family members by hand, ironing clothes and house cleaning and child care. The youngest child in this family is six years old so he attends nursery school in the mornings. Other children attend school all day.

The family lives in a modern brick cemented house with electricity, water heater and modern kitchen with a gas stove that is used interchangeably with a charcoal stove. The house has a refrigerator.

Her daily schedule starts at 6:00 a.m.. Her morning schedule entails preparing breakfast for the family, and getting children ready for school. A typical breakfast might include, eggs, bread, porridge and tea. The meals are typically prepared on the gas stove, especially breakfast. Food that requires longer cooking time is prepared on the 3-stone firewood stove.

On a typical day,after fixing breakfast. Mw gets the youngest child ready for school and packs lunches for the older children. After the family leaves, Mw cleans up the cemented six bedroom house. To clean the house, she would wipe the floors with a damp cloth and then occasionally polish the floors. Other house cleaning duties include, dusting the tables, stools and windows, as well as cleaning up a large area carpet in the living room.

Clothes are hand washed practically everyday of the week except on Sunday when the family and Mw and her daughter go for church service. The pile of clothes for everyday washing may include school uniforms for the children, and shirts and dresses for the employers. On a typical sunny day, clothes are washed and hanged to dry on a clothes line.

After washing and hanging clothes outdoors, usually the next task is to prepare lunch for the male head of the family and the youngest child who returns home from school after 12 midday. On many occasions, unexpected visitors are also included to be served a noon meal. Mw washes dishes and then prepares to iron clothes in the afternoon. Clothes are usually dry for ironing by 2:00 in the afternoon and this chore takes most of the afternoon.

Occasionally, Mw would start preparing dinner early in the afternoon especially if she is cooking a Kikuyu dish of dry maize and beans. This food takes at least four hours of preparation time. When she has to boil the mixture of maize and beans then she would economize on her work time because she does not have to attend to the cooking food for extended periods of time. Such a dish is also used on other days to augment other family dishes such as potatoes, or green vegetables.

After ironing clothes, Mw prepares to make evening tea. Usually she would prepare the tea and put it in a thermos so that family members could serve themselves when they arrived home in the evening. Mw, then prepares food for the family's dinner. After serving dinner, Mw washes dishes cleans up food preparation area and makes the last tea for the day.

Yard Chores

Mw has extra responsibilities of planting and tending to the family vegetable plot. Typically she plants vegetables such as kale, spinach, carrots and tomatoes. She is helped with this chore by other family members during the weekends. She attends to the plot on the other days of the week.

On weekends, Mw gets extra help from the family members, for example in food preparation. Her female employer may prepare family meals, while the young adults help in the garden plot. However, there is also major house work, since most of the family members are home for both lunch and dinner. Food preparation takes more time than on weekdays.

Mw, has a day off from work on Sunday when she accompanies her employers to church and can visit her friends and family. She reports to work in time to prepare the evening meals for the family and her daughter.